THE

LONDON READER

of Literature, Science, Art, and General Information.

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No. 1330.—VOL. LXXI.] FOR THE WEEK ENDING MAY 28, 1898. [PRICE ONE PENNY.

"ONE KISS, IN PITY, BEFORE I GO!" BEGGED PHILLIP.

MAGGIE'S SACRIFICE.

[A NOVELETTE.]

CHAPTER I.

THE autumn sun was glorifying the tall oaks and elms around Oakdale Rectory, gilding the ruddy-flushed leaves, glancing on the silvery stems of the birches, lighting up the glowing red fruit of the haws, so heavily laden that the branches dropped almost to the earth, with its thick carpet of bronze, gold, and tawny fallen leaves; resting on the horse-chestnuts, with their prickly-coated nuts hanging in great clustering bunches; and the still-flowering honeysuckle, crowning the hedges with bright blossoms, and the silvery weed laying its yellow flower level on the ground for the passer-by to tread on and crush with careless foot. A belated chiff-chaff was calling in the copse, merrily as though it were spring—gay, jubilant, youthful spring—when all his feathered brethren, the swallows, starlings, finches, sparrows, were building their nests, whistling, chirping, singing the while.

They had gone forth into the midst of the silken, shining stubble, all save the swallows, who lingered yet, taking counsel wisely as they stood in rows of fifteen or twenty on the slanting greys that held up the poles of the rich cloths spread over the yet unfinished cornricks; and the rooks, cawing loudly as they busied themselves among the acorns, and looked with contempt on the gaudy-plumaged pheasants, modestly picking up those that had fallen, content "with the crumbs," &c.

Up in a swing, slung between two giant oaks, whose ample greenery was beginning to show yellow spots, was a little child, a boy between three and four years' old, with soft, violet eyes, deep in colour as the velvety petals of a pansy, silky, chestnut curls, and a face so dimpled, fresh, and sweet that it veritably looked as if "made out of a rose."

On the grass beneath sat four others, varying in age from nine to fourteen; and at his side, guiding the swing as it rocked gently to and fro, stood a young girl, with purple orbs and chestnut tresses, so similar that it showed plainly they were brother and sister, if her tender care of him, and the proud and loving looks she bestowed on him, had not announced the fact with equal plainness.

"Higher, higher!" he cried, imperatively, with a wave of his little chubby fist. "'Ou don't tend me half high enough."

"You mustn't go any higher, Robbie," she answered, gently; "you might fall out."

"Me don't tare," he announced, valiantly.

"What! Would you like to fall down and break your crown as Jack and Jill did?" queried his elder brother Dick, looking up from his occupation of stringing a kite.

"Me sudn't mind, if me tud go up, up yight to the sky, and touse it with my toot," pointing at

a diminutive foot, cased in small leather shoes, ornamented with buckles.

"You small duffer!" exclaimed Gus, another brother, and a pickle, with ineffable scorn. "You could never get up as high as that."

"'Es me tud, if Maggie pooned me hard enough."

"No you couldn't. You're miles and miles and miles away from the sky."

"No me's not."

"Yes you are, young 'un. Wait till you go to school and learn something, then perhaps you'll be able to understand these scientific matters," declared Gus, with an air of wisdom, very amusing in a boy of nine.

"Me does understand, 'ou nassy sing," with a grimace.

"Don't tease him," interfered Dick; "he'll be in tears in a minute if you go on like that."

"The baby."

"It isn't so long since you used to cry, Master Augustus. I remember you taking the moon for an airball, and screeching like a demon because no one felt equal to the task of sailing up to the clouds and fetching it down for you."

"Pooh! What rubbish!"

"What do you mean? It's not rubbish."

"Yes it is. I never was such a fool as that."

"Yes you were."

"No I wasn't."

"Yes you——"

"Boys, boys," interrupted Maggie, quickly, "no quarrelling. If I hear another disagreeable word there will be nothing but dry bread for tea to-night. No jam, no nuts."

This dreadful threat effectually silenced the squabblers. Dick went on with his kite, George yawned over his book, and the twins, Gus and Walter, went away to the still pond in a remote corner of the wild old garden, to gather the tall spikes of the purple loose-strife, which grew in great bunches around it, and to investigate the place where the moorhen had built her nest the winter before, and speculate on the chances of her returning to her old quarters.

"Div me one dood swing now," whispered Robbie, entreatingly, as his brothers quieted down.

"Not very high, ducky."

"Higher dan dat."

"No, sweetheart; you might fall."

"Dust once," he pleaded; and just once she swung him up farther than was quite safe, and caught him in her arms as he sprang from the cushioned seat with a crow and chuckle of baby triumph.

"Maggie, Maggie."

"Yes, mother," cried the young girl, responding to the call, her clear, sweet tones ringing out musically on the air.

"I want you; come in, dear."

"Yes, mother," and with a parting caution to Dick and George not to behave badly, she wended her way across the soft turf, carrying Robbie astride her back, his chestnut curls mingling with her own bright tresses, as he bent his head to whisper nonsense in her ear, his dimpled face aglow with health and happiness, and roguish mischief.

In the somewhat dingy morning-room sat Mrs. Dawson, and the faded crimson curtains, the threadbare carpet, the well-worn leather chairs, the shabby bookcase, with its dog-eared, soiled load of books, and the general poverty-stricken, bygone aspect of the place seemed in some peculiar way to harmonise with its sole and only occupant.

Such things formed a fitting background for her faded, careworn face, and plain, far from new, or fashionable gown.

The face had once been pretty; there were traces left yet—in the fair hair, growing thickly above the white temples; in the blue eyes, large, soft, but heavy with grief and care, that care which a large family and a small income invariably brings to the human countenance; in the delicate features and well-shaped head; but the cheek was too sharply outlined, the mouth wore a look of pain, and lines were plainly visible at the corners and round the dim, sad eyes. While, as to her gown, that had never had the smallest pretensions to loveliness, and in its coarseness of texture and simplicity of make would have been despised and rejected by many a lady-help or finished domestic.

She was in harmony with her surroundings, the poor, world-worn, weary mother. With her children it was different. The two bright, beautiful young faces seemed certainly to bring a ray of sunshine into the dusky-panelled room, but then they also seemed to lack a dainty, brilliant, costly setting that would have thrown up and brought out the delicate complexions and glossy tresses. They were lost in the dim shadows, the general gloom, yet the loving parent did not notice it as they entered. She only saw her darlings as she wished them to be, full of health and spirits, as she greeted them with a tender kiss.

"Robbie been a good boy?"

"Very dood," he declared, with confidential confidence, as he returned her kiss; and then, seating himself at her feet, began to what he called "needleworking," with a great darning-needle and a bit of calico, industriously stitching it up one minute, and taking it to pieces the next, with a persistency and patience worthy of a better cause.

"What is it, mother?"

Maggie looked a little anxiously at Mrs. Dawson as she spoke, for she was often—too often, alas!—considering only sixteen summers had passed over her head, called in from a tea under the beeches or a picnic in the adjoining field with the boys, to be consulted as to how Mr. Southdown, the butcher, should be pacified until the Rector received his next quarters' money, or how Alderney, the milk and butterman, should be induced to give a little, just a little, longer credit, or as to whether the boy's boots would last another week without repairing, and their coats and continuations another term, and on many other trivial, yet momentous and wearing questions.

"I have got out the gowns, dear; there they are," pointing to half-a-dozen dresses lying on the sofa. "You had better look them over, and see if you think any one or two of them could be turned to account."

"They all seem rather heavy," doubtfully, with a glance at the pile of antique finery on the sofa.

"That is what I was afraid of. This," taking up a striped silk, yellow and brown, hideous in the extreme, "is too old-looking for you."

"Yes, and too soiled," indicating a wine splash that marked several breadths with a dull, red stain.

"True. That I wore at your Aunt Mary's wedding, and a careless servant poured the contents of the claret-jug over me."

"How annoying! This is fresher, but of course I couldn't appear in velvet."

"Of course not. It could not be thought of. Still that is a beautiful thing, and will make up by-and-by for you. It was the only dinner dress in my trousseau," and the Rector's wife eyed the purple velvet with its point trimmings tenderly. It brought back to her memory many a happy day, twenty years ago, when she was a bride, and all things seemed *couleur de rose* to her young eyes.

> "Alas! those days can come no more
> To this weary heart of mine,
> Though flowers may spring and larks may soar,
> And summer suns may shine,"

she murmured softly, and then went on quickly to hide her emotion,—

"The blue poplin is faded, and not the sort of blue worn now; that grenadine is quite rusty, and crumpled beyond redeeming; the tarlatan is too soiled, and the muslin is rotten, I fear, lying by so long, and of course you would not care to wear it, I don't know what you are to do, love."

"Nor I, mother," she answered, dolefully.

"My poor girl!" caressing the fair head leaning against her breast, "and I wanted you to go. You have so little amusement, so little pleasure in life."

"I have you, mater."

"Yes, darling. Still, this will be a grand affair, quite different from the little tea-parties you have been to at Leigh; and I know you are fond of dancing. How hard it is to be poor sometimes, and not be able to help and assist those near and dear to us as well as necessitous strangers. I suppose we couldn't do anything with the muslin?"

"I don't see why we shouldn't," returned Maggie, brightly.

"Would you wear it?" questioningly.

"To be sure I would, dear, if we can alter and modernise it. I don't believe it is rotten," taking up the soft, limp dress and examining it closely.

"Perhaps not."

"It is very fine and clear, and this embroidery is lovely!"

"Yes. Your Uncle Dick brought it from India for me as a wedding present, so I know it is good; and if it will bear remaking and getting up I don't see why we should not be able to make a pretty, if simple, gown of it."

"Nor I," cried the girl, with sparkling eyes and rose-flushed cheeks. "Have you any lace?"

"Yes; I bought some from Dame Turton last week."

"How much? Enough for trimming a flounce and the neck and shoulders?"

"Quite; I have over two dozen yards. That will be ample, and with some pink or blue knots of ribbon about it, it will look charming."

"I would rather have it without the ribbon, mother. Plain white, with natural flowers."

"Perhaps you are right, and that would be best."

"And about shoes, gloves, and a fan?"

"You have the silk gloves you wore this summer?"

"Yes."

"They must be cleaned, and will do for you. I think I can manage to buy a new pair of shoes. They must be black ones, though, Mag; we can't afford white."

"No, indeed."

"And I think I have a fan upstairs that may do for you. Rather old-fashioned; still that can't be helped, and better than none in a hot room."

"Very much better. Shall we go and look for it now?"

"If you like," returned the mother, smiling up fondly into the beautiful, eager face, so full of expectancy; and together they went up to the room where Mrs. Dawson kept her few treasures—her few relics of that prosperous past which had departed, never to return—and after turning out many drawers and many boxes they found a small telescope fan of a hideous buff hue, on which were depicted several ladies and gentlemen of the Watteau era in powdered wigs and laced coats, a horrible travesty of the original thing, nevertheless very acceptable to Maggie, who took possession of it at once, remarking that it was as well to have everything ready in good time, in which her mother quite agreed; and the rest of the afternoon was spent in taking the muslin to pieces, preparatory to putting it together again in a newer and more fashionable style.

And a great deal was done before Mrs. Dawson was called away to give the finishing touches to the late dinner the Rector liked and looked forward to, little knowing what extra trouble and expense it entailed on his patient, long-suffering wife.

He was a good man at bottom, but dreamy and visionary and somewhat indolent, especially where money matters were concerned.

Mrs. Dawson managed everything, and as she was too unselfish to let him know the struggle she had—which seemed to grow harder every day as the six olive branches grew up and required more to make both ends of their slender income meet—he was rather in the dark as to the true state of affairs, accepted all things as a matter of course, and actually revelled in the nice, tasty dinners she provided, quite unconscious that his five sons and one daughter, who took their tea at the same hour in the dingy morning and school-room, very often had to be content with a great hunch of dry bread and small quantity of tea with a similar supply of watery tea.

Had he known it he would have been the first to declare that the *régime* must be altered. But he did not know it, and so he ate his game, and his *entrées*, and his poultry, and took the light wines provided for him in silence, and enjoyed them, and was grateful for them, and altogether was easy-going and happy, and never by any chance paid a visit to the schoolroom after tea in the day.

Had he gone there during the week that followed the finding of the muslin gown he might have been rather astonished, for every evening the long table was pushed aside, the two or three squares of carpet taken up from the polished floor, and Dick, seating himself at the broken-down piano, would thump away heartily at the "Blue Danube," "The Adieu," "Manola," and one or two other antique waltzes, while Maggie would practise with her brothers the last new thing in steps.

Dick, who was considered an authority on such matters—no one member of the Dawson family knew why—declared she must rehearse every evening when he heard she was going to a dance.

"What's this finery for?" he had asked, when he first saw his sister occupied with the filmy Indian muslin.

"For me to wear," responded Miss Dawson, with dignity.

"My! won't you be cold these chilly days? You ought to have made that six months ago. You've commenced the wrong end of the year."

"Don't be ridiculous, Dick. Of course it is for evening wear."

"Evening wear! St. Christopher! you don't say so; and who is going to give an entertainment sufficiently magnificent for such gorgeous attire?"

"Mrs. Compton."

"Does she mean to wake up at last?"

"I suppose she does, as she is giving this ball."

"Fancy your going to a ball, Mag—an actual ball! Don't you feel tall and important!"

"No, you goosey!"

"Then you ought to, you ducky! And what is the cause of this outbreak of gaiety on the part of the old lady?"

"Her cousin, Philip Forrester, is staying with her."

"Oh! I see, a London swell, and he must be amused somehow or the other, or die of *ennui*, and she means to keep him alive by dancing him."

"You speak as though he were an infant, and she meant to dandle him in her arms," laughed Gus.

"Oh, dear no! it will be the other way about; he will 'dandle' the girls, if they be pretty, in his arms," retorted Dick.

"Hardly," expostulated Maggie, in horror, "it wouldn't be proper."

"Well, it is next door to dandling when a fellow gets one arm round a girl's waist and the other round her neck, and both here round his, and carries her about the room. Now, isn't it?"

"No, certainly not!"

"Well, we won't quarrel about it. By-the way, how is your dancing, Mag? You mustn't disgrace us by floundering about like a cow in a cabbage garden at the Hall."

"She never could disgrace us!" shouted the younger boys in loud and shrill chorus.

"We won't give her a chance," said Dick, coolly, "she shall have a spin every night."

And so she did; and they all, even Dick the particular, declared she was perfect, light as a feather, graceful as a bird and that was praise from her brothers—those most unappreciative of all animals in the world.

CHAPTER II.

MEANWHILE, the object of all this fuss, bustle, and preparation, Philip Forrester, took matters very coolly and quietly.

He had come down to Leigh, not to be fêted and lionised, but to seek repose, quiet, and oblivion, what he had been restlessly and vainly seeking for over a year; forgetfulness of the past, and of a certain lovely face that haunted him persistently despite his valiant efforts to drive it from mind and memory; to blot out that short, sweet episode when Blanche Ferrol—queenly, regal Blanche!—reigned supreme, mistress of his heart and affections.

He could not do it, strive how he would. Again and again before his mind's eye rose the oval face, pure, pale, and colourless, with its ebon-lashed grey eyes, luminous as twin stars, its proud yet beautiful mouth, with arching upper lip and pearly teeth, its classic features framed in black braids, heavy, lustreless, soft, and wavy.

How could he forget it! He had never, would never see so perfect a woman again, and she was his once—his alone—pledged to become his wife, and he lost her! Jealousy and mistrust did their worst on his side, and pride and wounded love on hers.

She could not tolerate that he should suspect her even of a passing fancy for another man, when she was his promised wife. It was an insult to her honour, her purity, her fine sense of delicacy; much less could she permit him to accuse her of such a thing. It was an offence not easily forgiven by such a woman, and he, hot-tempered and suspicious, did not trouble to investigate what she haughtily refused to explain, and thus these two, once so much to each other, parted. They did not drift slowly asunder, but one wild wave of passion divided the intermingled current of their lives, sent them flying singly down the stream,—

> "Like ships upon the ocean,
> That lose each other in a storm at night;
> And in the sunlit morn, with gentle motion
> The two sail out of sight.
> So hearts that touch each other, and together
> Fare side by side through life a little space,
> Again are parted by the stress of weather,
> Alone to journey on apace."

With smiling faces and aching hearts, for how many serene faces are mere masks that shroud and veil the agony of the mind, the anguished throbs of a torn and lacerated heart, whose every beat is torture, and the only remedy for which is death—grim, ghastly death—who comes to some poor mortals in the guise of a welcome angel to release them from pains, troubles, remorse, regrets too heavy to bear, to whom they open their arms, longing to clasp the grisly form to an aching breast, and find, at last, peace and rest.

Leigh was pretty and rural, a regular English village, and the young man often lounged through its one really respectable street, with the thirteenth century church at the top, noting with somewhat languid interest the peculiarities of the place:—

The forge, where the three great rough smiths, regular sons of Vulcan, shoed the numerous horses brought from far and near to them, or beat the red-hot bars of iron with huge hammers till the sparks flew about in all directions, and the air was full of the sonorous clang of iron against iron.

The almshouses, built in the reign of Elizabeth, quaint, grey, time and weather-worn, in the gardens of which rambled or reclined, according to fancy and inclination, dried-up old gaffers, and wizened, pippin-faced gammers, who matched the building admirably.

The only publichouse the place boasted was a galleried, gable-ended, dusky old building, much frequented by the neighbouring rustics, who divided their time about equally between it and the "stores," a ramshackle kind of a hut, where everything was huddled together promiscuously, and almost anything could be purchased, from a whole pig to a pennyworth of pins, and where candles, figs, almonds, soap, glue, cheese, brooms, saucepans, fibre mats, sugar, tea, lard, cottons, needles, jams, pickles, tintacks, calico, apples, cakes, sweets, worsteds, and a heterogeneous collection of other things were crammed pell-mell into the window to tempt passers-by.

And the post-office, which he often patronised for stamps, a white-washed cottage with green porch overhung with honeysuckle and late roses, at the back of which Chanticleer and his dames strutted about with conscious pride in their superiority over the ducks disporting themselves in a large pan of dirty water, and the black and pink piglets wallowed and grunted, and chased each other with savage playfulness.

It was all rural, charming, old-fashioned; and he enjoyed, in a mild sort of way, lounging on the soft moss-grown banks, studded with autumn wild flowers, gazing at the woodlands ablaze with ruddy tints, strolling where the nuts hung in great, ripe, brown clusters, hard and tasteful; leaning over gates watching the kine standing knee-deep in the lush grasses lazily chewing the cud, their soft, sleepy eyes half shut, and the partridges and pheasants stretching their long necks, and whisking their long tails amid the glistening stubble.

After all it was delightful doing nothing; just idling through the lovely autumn days, bright with the "Indian summer," and the haze of subdued golden sunshine, that cast tawny lights on fern, and bracken, and grass, the atmosphere holding the yellow beams, increasing the tawniness, glowing on the thatch of the wheat ricks, and the red tiles of the farm outhouses till they seemed to smoulder in the glow. To the faded Londoner the bright mornings, the misty, shadowy afternoons, and the fresh, crisp evenings, with just a suspicion, a hint of frost about them, were delicious. He renewed some of his youth and strength as he strolled over the dew-wet grass, or tramped through a field of mangolds after the partridges, every step bracing and hardening his frame, restoring his mind to a more even balance, and making the past year, and all its sad events, recede a little into a dimmer recess of his mind.

"Rather a bore, this dance at the Hall to-night," he said on the afternoon of the day fixed for it, as he and his friend, Guy Stanton, turned back through the stubble, on their homeward way, after slaughtering some twelve brace of birds; "don't you think so?"

"No, hardly," returned the younger man, with a gay, ringing laugh, full of genuine merriment. "I am not such a used up, *blasé* fellow as you are, and I confess I am looking forward to some pleasure this evening."

"Say rather fun," growled Forrester. "It may be fun to watch the rustic maidens of these parts rush and charge through a quadrille, of flounder and flop in their endeavours to waltz. But pleasure—my dear fellow, just reflect for an instant—is it any pleasure to sail round the room with an oak tree in your arms, or a feather bed with a ton of iron attached to it hanging on to you?"

"I've never tried either, so I can't possibly say, and I don't at all see why all the girls about here must necessarily be oak trees or heavy weights."

"It is so far from town," expostulated the other, "and they can't have much practice in a dull village of this kind."

"Possibly not. Still some women naturally dance well without any training; probably we shall meet some here."

"Not very likely."

"Possible, not probable. Still, I'll bet you a bottle of cham before the evening is out you'll be making desperate love in a dim corner to some pretty rustic, all eyes, exclamations, and admiration for you, and everything else!"

"Pooh!" exclaimed Forrester, contemptuously. "I've done with all that sort of thing."

"Thoroughly used up, eh? Well, you were a terrible fellow once upon a time. A regular Jack among the Jills!"

"In my salad days. I shall never flirt again," and, almost unconsciously, he sighed heavily.

"Never seek your heaven 'In woman's eyes!" jested Guy, who knew all the details of his friend's love affair, and often tried to rally him out of the melancholy that possessed him, with, however, scant success.

Forrester was one of those who feel deeply, yet give little outward sign of the inward agony; his feelings seemed numbed, dead, and he believed himself utterly incapable of again experiencing any of the pain or pleasure the tender passion brings in its train, so he shook his head, and said,—

"No."

"Well, I don't believe you. You'll gaze into azure depths or violet orbs, or brown eyes, and sigh as furiously as you ever have. See if you don't before this night is over, too;" and with another gay laugh Stanton entered the Hall, followed by Philip, and going to their room, after a hurried dinner, proceeded to don evening dress.

The fine old Hall was a blaze of light from garret to basement. In the drawing and reception rooms the perfume of flowers and exotics hung heavy and sweet in the air, and the music, dispensed by a military band from the neighbouring garrison town, was lively enough to have made a monk from La Trappe dance, speak, and make merry. The girls were fair, the dresses bright and pretty, and altogether the ancestral portraits of dead and bygone Comptons had a gay scene to look down on, and chase the frown from their gloomy brows; only, somehow, the frowns did not go from the pictured faces any more than they did from that of Philip Forrester's, as he leant against the door watching the throng surging to and fro through the handsome, well-lighted rooms.

"You don't seem to be enjoying yourself, old man!" laughed Guy, as he passed with a pretty grass widow, to whom he had been devoting himself in a very reckless fashion, hanging on to his arm.

"No, I am not," returned the "old man," shortly. "Nothing to enjoy."

"Oh! treason, Mr. Forrester," smiled the widow, archly, giving him a playful tap with a fan of gigantic dimensions. "Why, where are your eyes?"

"Well, at present, to the best of my belief, they are in my head."

"Then why don't you use them?"

"I have been doing so for the last hour or two—exercising them vigorously."

"But not usefully."

"That depends."

"I mean not to your own satisfaction."

"Hardly."

"You have seen nothing startling in the way of beauty—nothing that pleases you?"

"Nothing save your fair self," he responded, with somewhat overstrained gallantry.

"Oh, pooh! that's a mere empty compliment. You don't mean it a bit, I can see by the look on your face. You said it because you thought I was fishing," and Mrs. Montgomery pouted her full crimson lips in a very taking fashion, only it was lost on him—a regular strewing of pearls before swine, for he was not looking at her.

"The water is too shallow; don't try to fish there. Here is an inexhaustible well, a fathomless pool, where you may fish, and fish, and fish, and still find sport," and Guy struck his breast with his gloved hand, and looked straight down into the bold dark eyes of the woman on his arm.

"That sounds encouraging. I must try the spot."

"Do. Let me lead you to a quiet, secluded spot, where you can have every opportunity of testing the truth of my assertion."

"And of punishing you if I find you have made a false and delusive statement?"

"Certainly. Only I hope the punishment will take the form of kisses," whispered Guy, audaciously.

"Ah! *coquin*!" murmured Mrs. Montgomery, with a killing glance and a shrug of her gleaming white shoulders that somehow or other suggested visions of pearl-powder and bismuth, so dazzlingly and unnaturally fair were they. "Your coolness knows no bounds."

"None where a pretty woman is concerned," he agreed.

"Adieu for the present. Oh! knight of the rueful countenance, when we meet again in this crowd I trust you will wear a brighter expression. Until we do, make better use of your eyes. There is something worth looking at in the feminine way over there in the blue ante-room."

And with this parting piece of advice the grass widow glided away with Stanton to find a cool, dark corner in the conservatory, where she might conveniently and quietly listen to that broad, and almost risky, flattery which was as the very wine of life to the vain, frivolous, empty-pated little woman, and without which, in large and almost daily doses, she would have moped, and sickened, and shrivelled up as her prototypes, the butterflies, do when the sunbeams lose their warmth, and the first keen touch of frost in the air tells that autumn has arrived.

CHAPTER III.

For a while Forrester stood where they left him, idly scanning the passers-by; and then impelled by some motive, he could not tell what, unless it was one of curiosity, he sauntered over to the ante-room, and, pushing aside the heavy velvet *portières*, went in.

An exclamation of surprise half rose to his lips, and was crushed back as his eyes fell on a lovely girl, sitting on a blue *fauteuil*, talking to a young man.

The blue velvet formed an admirable back ground to the dainty chestnut-tressed head and transparent rose-tinted face.

He thought he had never seen anything so beautiful, and fairylike, and fragile. In truth, few would have recognised little Maggie Dawson in the elegant and lovely girl who graced Mrs. Compton's rooms.

The soft muslin fell in light folds around the slight figure, leaving the white arms and throat bare. Her only ornaments were a few white roses, and the effect was charming—more so as she was quite unconscious of her good looks, and perfectly natural in her manners and gestures.

"Wonder who she is?" he muttered, watching her furtively, and envying the bucolic-looking youth at her side, who, from his porky face and general heaviness of aspect, might reasonably be supposed to have a soul appreciative only of beeves, and hogs, and agricultural produce.

Yet here he was side by side with out and away the fairest piece of womanhood in the rooms. It was too bad. Forrester felt personally aggrieved and insulted.

How could such a lout appreciate such a fairy? Why, he couldn't, of course; and, equally, of course, it was Forrester's duty to relieve her of such a fellow, which he quickly did by getting introduced, and taking possession of her himself, much to the porky one's disgust and chagrin.

"Are you fond of dancing?" he asked, in the pauses of a waltz, which he acknowledged to himself was one of the most delightful he had ever had, as far as a good partner was concerned.

"Oh, yes, very!" lifting the pansy eyes, and letting him have his first good look at them.

"By Jove! how lovely!" he murmured, noting the exquisite colouring and the rim of long, inky lashes that darkened and softened the starry orbs.

"You don't get very much of it down here, I suppose!" he went on, aloud.

"No, not much."

"You can count the dances on your fingers easily!"

"Yes, easily."

"What sort of entertainments are most favoured by the good folks of Leigh?"

"Tea-parties and sewing bees."

"Lively arrangements, I should say. You like dances best?"

"Much the best—that is to say, this one. I have only been to children's parties before."

"I see; you are not out yet."

"No-o," she faltered, not quite understanding what he meant.

"You will want some more after this?"

"Yes; but I can always waltz with Dick; he is a beautiful dancer."

"And who is Dick?" with a queer little ring in his tones.

"My eldest brother."

"Oh. Have you many brothers?"

"Five."

"And you practise dancing with them all. No wonder you do it so well."

"All but Robbie. He is too small," she explained.

And then, somehow or other, he drew the whole account of her short life from her, and knew all about mother and father, and Dick, George, Robbie, and the twins, not even omitting Max, the fluffy-coated otter-hound, and Rogue the raven, and Jenny the old nurse, promoted to the honourable post of cook, slush, and butler since Rob, the baby, had been out of arms, and the finances growing narrower.

"Getting on better, aren't you?" inquired Guy, passing him later on with a quizzical glance.

"Yes, thanks!" returned his friend, coolly.

"Nice girl, isn't she?" nodding in the direction of Maggie, whom Philip had given up to another eager aspirant.

"More than nice—quite charming!"

"Chestnut her tresses, and violet her eyes,
Beaming with innocence, loving and baby like;
Dressed in a faded and old-fashioned gown,
She, with her prattle so sweet, captivated you
Gladly forgetting the belles of the town,
Love in a cottage you fancy now awaits you
Sighing no longer for fortune and fame,
Life seems to dance with renewed elasticity;
Rich your reward if you only can claim
Wealth from the lips of your Little Simplicity,"

quoted Guy, with a very wicked smile.

"Take care, Philip! baby eyes are dangerous, and baby lips. You will lose your heart."

"I haven't one to lose."

"Then a leaf from the artichoke that does duty within you for one. You sad fellow, you owe me a bottle of cham."

"You are quite welcome to a dozen."

"Indeed! Is a waltz with 'Little Simplicity' worth so much?"

"Quite worth it. She dances divinely. Try her, Guy, and see if I am not speaking the truth."

"I will, dear boy. The man must be a queer animal who would want much persuasion to make the acquaintance of such an angel;" and he went off to seek an introduction, but found it useless, as Maggie's card was full.

Others in the room had marked the rare loveliness of face and form. She was literally besieged by would-be partners, and could have danced every dance twice over. However, she was not much elated at her triumphs. There was only one she felt she would care to meet again, care to dance with often, and that one was Philip Forrester. With a few soft words, a few softer glances, he had won "Little Simplicity's" heart. He was unconscious of it, utterly and entirely, or he might have reflected before he got Mrs. Compton to take him to call at the Rectory and establish him as *ami de la maison*.

He did not reflect: how few men do in such matters, thereby wrecking and ruining the lives of many women whom a little unselfish thought would spare hours and hours of dreary misery, and he got into the habit of dropping in at the old-fashioned house every day at some time or other, morning, afternoon, or evening.

He found it wonderfully pleasant, sitting under the oaks and having tea with Maggie and the children, sky-blue and thick bread-and-butter, when the weather was fine, or nutting in the dusky recesses of the woods, or sitting round the fire in the schoolroom on wet days, watching her eyes fill with eager wonder and her lips part, as he told her stories and anecdotes of that gay, fashionable world to which he belonged, and which was a sealed book to her.

She was so innocent and fresh, so full of exotic charm and unartificial grace, that she insensibly wound herself into his affections in a way he did not quite understand then, though he did well later on—interested him, and unconsciously flattered his vanity—that vanity which had been so sorely wounded, so roughly handled by another woman. She knew nothing of worldly ways or arts, of concealing what she felt; and she always sprang forward to meet him, looking so delightfully glad to see him when he came that he grew to look forward to her greetings, to wish for them, to long for them, to feel his life would be emptier than it had

been during the past year without her. The fair, innocent girl he thought had stepped into the place in his heart Blanche Ferrol left vacant. He deluded himself into the belief that he had forgotten the regal woman, with her queenly, polished manners, and thorough knowledge of the world, at last; and that this soft, sweet, modest little country blossom would satisfy the longings and aspirations of his proud spirit. It was a fresh sensation for him—the unconcealed admiration of a young and lovely girl—and he enjoyed it despite the laughing warnings given by Guy Stanton.

"Take care, beware! Little Simplicity will do you more damage than a finished coquette—work dreadful havoc with those big, violet eyes."

"Poor little woman," muttered Philip, with unconscious tenderness, "she will never do any one, save her own sweet self, damage of that sort, I'm sure."

"Ah! old man, hard hit, I see! I shouldn't wonder if Little Simplicity blossoms into Mrs. Philip Forrester one of these days."

"I might do worse," returned Forrester, quickly.

"I quite agree with you," laughed his friend.

"Yes, I might do worse," he repeated, dreamily, as later on in the day he sauntered over to the Rectory, and saw her nipping off the yellow and white chrysanthemums, and throwing them into a basket Robbie held, the sunrays lingering among her bright tresses lovingly, throwing deeper shadows into the pansy eyes. "I might do worse. She is very charming, and well-dressed would make quite a sensation in my world. I shall never forget Blanche quite. Still, why should I wear the willow for her? Better to steep my mind in oblivion as far as she is concerned, and stretch out my hand to grasp the happiness that lies within my reach."

"Is it you?"

The lovely, tremulous colour rose to Maggie's face as she turned and found him at her side. The scissors were dropped, the thick gloves torn off, and both small hands were stretched out to him, while a glad smile hovered round the rosy lips, and a glad light shone in the soft eyes.

It was pleasant to receive such a welcome, and he held the hands longer than was absolutely necessary, and pressed them warmly, if the truth must be told.

"Are you glad to see me?" he asked, looking down at her.

"Very glad. Why, I did not see you all yesterday."

"Quite an age!" he smiled.

"It seemed so to me," she acknowledged naively.

"You missed me!"

"Yes; I have so few friends," she said, plaintively. "I can't afford to spare one for——"

"Even a day!" he interrupted.

"Not for even a day," she repeated. "Not at least those I like; those that are near and d——"

There she stopped suddenly, crimsoning from brow to throat.

"Were you going to say 'dear' to you?" he asked, coolly.

"No," she faltered.

"Maggie, that is a fib, I fear," bending till he could look into her downcast face. "You were going to say that; at least, I hope you were, for I should like to think you don't—hate me."

"You know I don't do that," giving him a reproachful glance.

"And if I were to go away for a long time would you be sorry? Would you miss me very much?"

"I should, indeed," she answered, wistfully, the rounded cheeks paling at the mere idea of her Sir Galahad's departure.

"Perhaps I shall have to go soon," he went on, watching her.

"Soon!" she echoed—a sob she hardly tried to check rising to her lips, that quivered pitifully.

"Yes, soon, perhaps."

"And—then I shall not see you any longer? When you go it will be a parting—for ever."

"There will be no parting for us unless you wish that it shall be so!" he cried, passionately.

"No—how—why?" she gasped, startled at this sudden display of passion and vehemence.

"Only death can sever those who truly love when they are man and wife, and that is what I want you to be to me. Will you be that?" throwing his arms round her. "Will you be my wife?"

For a whole moment she remained silent, gazing into his face, full of wonder and doubt; but as their eyes met her doubts fled, as mountain mists before the beams of the morning sun; their spirits met, their souls rushed together, in the touch of lip upon lip. The strong power of love had overcome reluctance and timidity on the one side, doubt on the other.

They were drawn together by an irresistible something, intangible, yet powerful; and she stood within the shelter of his encircling arms, trembling at the happiness which was hers—a happiness which she had not dared to dream of an hour before; and he felt some of his lost youth come back at the touch of that soft mouth, fluttering like the petals of a wind-blown, crimson rose.

"Have you no answer to give me?" he whispered, in a tone that thrilled her through with a pleasure so exquisite it was almost pain. "Not even a little 'yes?'"

Maggie lifted her eyes at his question, a tide of crimson sweeping over the fair face as she met his impassioned gaze. She linked her arms round his throat for an instant, murmuring "yes," and then hid her blushing face on his shoulder.

"Sweetheart," kissing the silky, chestnut locks, "the fault will not be mine if your path through life for the future be not strewn with roses, bright with sunbeams, rich in love. I want your affection; I stand in sore need of it. You can banish the dark clouds that have surrounded me for some time past. Make me happy, give me that joy I thought I had lost for ever! Will you be all in all to me? Give me undivided allegiance, the whole treasure of your young heart? Nothing less will satisfy me."

"You have it all," she answered, softly; "undivided. You are first with me, and will be so always."

"And you will be happy, you think, as my wife?"

"Oh, yes! so happy," she sighed, "so happy. I never dreamt of such a thing. And you?" she added, quickly, lifting the pansy eyes to his, a wistful light lurking in their purple depths. "Will you always really care for such a simple country girl as I am, entirely different from the beautiful women you have often told me of?"

"Can you doubt it?" he asked, his lips close to the shell-like ear, his hot breath fanning the fair cheek. "It is your innocence and simplicity which charms me; it is because you are different from the false-hearted, false-faced women of that world that I love you—and I shall love you all my life."

"Ah, do, do!" she cried, with sudden impetuosity; "do now that you have told me you will. How should I live without it? I could not—I should only exist."

"Have no fear, darling!" he answered confidently; "it is yours now and always; nothing can alter that."

"I hope, I trust not. You are so much to me."

"You think you will be happy—content with me? You will not regret your old home and feel sorrowful?"

"Ah, no! To be with you could never make me sorrowful. I shall be quite content and have no regrets. I only fear that you may tire of me."

His ear was greedy of her words, and his lips longing for her kisses; and he closed her mouth with a long caress. And when he lifted his the tender, shy face sank once more on to his breast, and the little hands clasped his throat lovingly. For that embrace, that long, passionate, clinging kiss, was a revelation to her—the opening of a new world, of which she, in her childlike innocence, had never dreamt; and she leant against his breast, silent and palpitating, the quick, restless throbs of her heart perceptible to him as he held her strained closely to him.

It was a moment of bliss for both—a rare, beautiful moment—full of eloquent silence, great delight, in which the subtle feelings of their inner natures spoke—a silence never to be forgotten, so full was it of all sweetness; and yet it passed like the flash of summer lightning, the sweep of a bird's wing, as everything fair in life does, and became but a memory to both, a memory sad and painful to one—sad with that pain of remembering what one would fain forget, because it brings back recollections of so much sweetness, lost for ever, and therefore better forgotten, buried with the dead past, that nothing can bring from its deep grave.

"You must not doubt me."

His voice broke the enchanted silence, and she lifted her head.

"Promise," he said, imperiously.

"I will try not to—only——"

"Only what?"

"My happiness seems too great to last. I shall always dread losing it—dread that you may change."

"Nonsense! you must not indulge such fancies. I forbid it. Do you hear?"

"Yes, I hear."

"And do you heed?"

"Yes."

"And will you obey?"

"Yes."

"That is right. And now that we have settled matters between ourselves, I must go and see the Rector."

"I wonder what father will say?" she murmured, doubtfully.

"I hope he won't refuse to give me this," kissing the small hand he held tenderly; "to make me your lord and master, master of these sweet lips," pressing his mouth to hers again; just as Robbie, who had been sent to the house with the basket of chrysanthemums, appeared at the top of the tree-shaded walk where the lovers stood, and the sight that met his astonished eyes made him run back to the schoolroom and tell Gus that "The strange man was tissin' Maggie, and huggin' her close like a big bear," which information fetched the boys, and they all trooped out to see this wonderful sight, and effectually put an end to the *tête-à-tête*.

"I will seek your father now, at once," said Philip, after an interchange of civilities with his brothers-in-law-elect, whom he hardly blessed for appearing just then.

"Will you?—so soon?" she murmured.

"Yes. Why not?"

"I—I—don't know."

"I don't suppose you do," he responded, promptly. "I want to know my fate at once—to know whether I am to be happy or miserable; so come along."

"You—you don't want me to come to father with you, do you?" she asked, timidly.

"No," he answered, with a light laugh; "I only want you to come as far as the house. I will face the Rector myself. Little coward!" he added, tenderly, "couldn't you do that much for me? And you say you love me."

A flush stole over her cheeks at his words, her eyes filled with tears, and the long lashes drooped, showing his words had hurt the sensitive heart.

"Dearest, I did not mean to pain you," he whispered.

"I know," she said, softly. "Only, believe me, I would do anything for you, and—I do love you."

"I believe, Maggie," he hastened to say, for he saw by the quiver of her lips how greatly she was moved. "Come," and together they went up the paths, between the beds of gay flowers, to the old house; and Gus, looking after them as they sauntered slowly along, assured the others gravely that,—

"He was quite sure that fellow Forrester was spoons on Maggie, and wanted to marry her; and he hoped the guv'nor wouldn't be such a duffer as to let him have her."

CHAPTER IV.

Mr. Dawson was far from anxious to part with his treasure, his only daughter. He could have spared one of his boys, but Maggie—that was a different matter.

However, Forrester pleaded hard for his consent, and after a long and serious talk with his wife—who, despite the fact that it nearly broke her heart to even think of parting with her beloved daughter, knew what great advantages would accrue from such a match—he gave a reluctant consent, and Philip was received as a future son-in-law.

That winter passed as none other had ever done to Maggie. An enchanted world opened for her. She had never been so happy, she would never be so happy again, as in those brief days when the clouds were grey, and the air chill, the rivers and ponds frozen, and the earth covered with a mantle of snow.

What mattered leaden skies, and snow-covered earth, the cold and dearth around?

The roses of life were all abloom for her—perfumery, strong, sweet. She was rich in love, tenderly cared for, lived in a paradise full of sunshine, blossoms, and happiness. Her life was glorified, was crowded with aspirations, feelings, joys, which she had never before experienced, and which gave her rare delight.

Philip was a model lover, and Little Simplicity had nothing to complain of. He was devoted, kind, and attentive, and lavished presents on her to such an extent that she hardly knew what to do with them. There was no more any necessity for her to appear in her mother's refurbished old gowns, to wear black shoes, when white were the right thing, nor to use ugly fans that destroyed the harmony of her appearance. No; her lover did not let her want for anything, and loaded her with jewellery, and nick-nacks, and pretty dresses and luxuries of which she had not even dreamed. And the light in the pansy eyes grew brighter, and the flush on the soft cheek deeper, and never had she looked so lovely.

The old, hard life of toil and striving and contriving was left behind to a great extent, and she and her dear ones tasted the sweets and pleasures that money can procure.

"Do you feel inclined to leave home for a month or six weeks?" asked her intended, one bright March morning, entering the schoolroom, where he generally found her on his arrival at the Rectory, with an open letter in his hand.

"I—I—don't—know!" she faltered, thinking it might separate her from him. "It would depend upon——"

"What?" he demanded, as she hesitated.

"Upon two—or three—things."

"What are they?"

"Where should I have to go, and would you come with me?"

"I can answer both these questions satisfactorily," he replied. "My sister Maud wants to make your acquaintance, and has invited you down to Henchfield, and I should go with you."

"Then I do feel inclined. There is nothing I should like better, or enjoy more."

"That is settled, then?"

"Oh; but Robbie, and—and—the boys."

"Well. What of them?"

"They would miss me so much, and there would be no one to look after baby," calling her youngest brother by his pet name.

"They will have to 'miss' you altogether some day, you know," he said, with a significance that brought the blood to her cheek.

"Yes,—I know," she faltered.

"Well, they had better begin at once, and I daresay Mrs. Dawson can manage Robbie for awhile."

"She is so busy," objected the dutiful daughter.

"Well, we must find her and speak to her about it."

And they did, and the unselfish woman at once said, "go" to her child, for she guessed intuitively what a disappointment not doing so would be to her. She assured Maggie that she would be able to look after and manage Robbie, though, in truth, her duties as a minister's wife left her scant leisure. Her mother's meetings, her sewing bees, her schools, her visits to the poor, and a hundred other calls on her time left her hardly a moment to herself, and she knew the sole charge of her youngest would be an onerous addition to her busy life; still she at once cheerfully accepted it.

When Maggie married it was an understood thing that Forrester would give them such help as would enable them to keep another servant as part nurse to the little fellow, and part assistant to Mrs. Dawson, but until he held the position of son-in-law such substantial assistance could not be accepted from him, as there is often in this life—too often, alas!—a slip 'twixt cup and lip, which shatters and destroys carefully laid plans. Maggie was quite ready to go, having heaps of pretty things, presents from Philip, and in less than a week she set off with him for Henchfield.

The journey was delightful to her, she had been about so little, and, moreover, taken with him it became supreme bliss. She was naïvely pleased with everything, and as he drove up the avenue of elms leading to his sister's place, in their dashing phaeton, which had met them at the station, and listened to her artless prattling, and looked into the pansy depths of her innocent eyes, so full of adoration for him, he felt a great calm joy steal over him, a sense of restfulness which he had not experienced since parting with Blanche Ferrol.

Afternoon tea was going on in the drawing-room. When they arrived it was full of people—a gay, chattering throng of idle butterflies, who sipped souchong, and daintily munched thin bread-and-butter, while they talked scandal, told racy stories, and highly flavoured *on dits* and tore their friends' and enemies' reputations to pieces with charming impartiality.

"And this is my little sister that is to be!" said Maud Henchfield, kissing the fair, childlike face.

"Yes. My future wife," said the brother.

"And a very charming one she will make. She's quite lovely, actually seraphic!" declared their hostess, in an audible aside to her guests in general.

"By Jove! that she is," muttered a plunger, with yellow moustaches, and big staring blue eyes.

"A regular clipper," murmured a sporting baronet, who stood next him.

"Never saw anything so pawfect," agreed a collegian, who being in his salad days admired everything and anything that men older than himself praised.

"She has the face of an angel," chimed in a clergyman, a fashionable person, whose Belgravian parishioners boasted no small share of good looks amongst them.

"Hope you are not jealous?" laughed Maud.

"Not in the least," returned Philip, though, in truth, he did feel somewhat annoyed at such outspoken praise of his promised bride—outspoken, yet meant to be veiled, because he saw she was covered with blushes, and confusion as much from the praise of the men as from the stony stares of envy, hatred, and malice with which the feminine portion of the community regarded her; and their looks were black indeed, for they scented mischief, and knew that Little Simplicity, with her fresh untouched beauty, would be a powerful rival, and take some of the lustre from their world-worn and slightly artificial charms.

"Let me find you a chair, and give you a cup of tea," suggested Mrs. Henchfield, who saw the gathering frown on her brother's brow.

"Thanks," murmured Maggie, too much overcome by the novelty of her position, and the stir she had caused, to be capable of saying more.

"Here is a nice, quiet corner, where you can see and yet not be seen, unless you like."

"Thanks," she repeated, sinking into the low chair by the corner jutting back from the mantelpiece, thankful to obtain some shelter from the volley of criticising looks.

After a time she summoned courage to look around, finding that everyone was chatting away vigorously, and had ceased to stare at her—that is to say, openly—for one or two of the men forgot their good breeding, and covertly stared hard.

It was a charming room—different from anything she had ever seen. Cosy, comfortable, slightly æsthetic, yet graceful and luxurious.

Heavy, gold-threaded curtains draped the windows, the *portieres* were of the same material, and the couches and chairs upholstered similarly. An ebony grand stood in one corner, a crimson plush easle supporting a mirror, beautifully painted, in another; brackets holding rare china adorned the walls, little tables were dotted about crowded with costly nick-nacks, Venetian glass, Dresden china, Benares brass-work, ivory carvings, antiques of all descriptions and kinks, and modern productions, both beautiful and fragile; masses of lovely flowers, hot-house blooms, were thrust with careless grace into vases and jars; tall palms stood in odd nooks, and delicate ferns in every available space and corner, and as a background, fairy-like, green, refreshing to the eye, was the conservatory, where the fountain threw up silvery jets into the air, which splashed down into the marble basin, where the gold fish disported themselves, with a musical murmur, and baskets of rare plants hung suspended by ornamental chains, and queer creeping things grew, and clung, and climbed.

"How are you getting on, little one?" asked her lover, making his way to her side after some time.

"Very well, thank you," she answered, shyly.

"Shall I get you some more tea?"

"No, thanks."

"Quite certain?"

"Quite."

"Then let me come and sit beside you, and tell you who the celebrities are. That is to say if you care to know. Do you?"

"Oh, yes, very much," she answered, readily, for she wanted to keep him at her side, though she did not much care about the celebrities.

"Who shall I begin with?"

"Anyone you like."

"Haven't you any curiosity about anyone present?"

"No, I don't think I have."

"Shows you've not mixed in the world much. What do you think of that stout lady in brown silk?"

"Not much. She looks commonplace."

"She does. Yet she is none other than Miss Finch, the celebrated authoress."

"Indeed!" said Maggie, studying her attentively. "I thought such a clever woman would look very different."

"So did I when I was as young as you are. I know better now—know that celebrities look very much like other people. That young fellow talking to her is a great admirer of Irving, and bearing a resemblance to him gets himself up to look like him, and recites bits out of Shakespeare. The man with the bald head and spectacles is Herr Shriekhen, the great German violinist, and the lady in blue silk, at his side, is the last new professional beauty, Miss Fredericks," and so on, and so on he went talking to her, trying to amuse and interest her, until Maud came and carried her off to her pretty bedroom, all blue satin and creamy lace, to dress for dinner, and told him to go and make himself presentable.

The room appeared too lovely to Maggie to be used as anything less than a boudoir. All the luxury and display overcame her, as did the attentions of a French maid whom Mrs. Henchfield sent to attend on her, and whose services she would far rather have dispensed with, but who, it must be acknowledged, dressed the abundant chestnut tresses to the greatest advantage, and gave several finishing touches, such as only a Parisian can, to the simple blue diaphanous gown Maggie selected from her stock, which added greatly to the loveliness of the young girl.

"*Mam'selle est gentille comme une ange*," murmured the maid, when she finished, and stood surveying the result of her pains, and so thought many of the men when the young girl appeared in the drawing-room: and they cast sundry envious glances at Philip as he led her into dinner, with an air of proprietorship, and devoted himself to her during the evening, to the exclusion of all others.

CHAPTER V.

LIFE was very bright at Henchfield. Day after day glided by, full of pleasure and enjoyment. Every moment was occupied pleasantly.

Maud was a capital hostess, her husband a model host, for he let his guests do just as they pleased, and never objected to the number his wife asked, or the length of their stay; and if she found anyone dull or uninteresting she soon managed to make them understand that they were out of their element under her hospitable roof, and had better "move on," which they invariably did, and were replaced by brighter and more attractive metal.

To Maggie she took a great fancy. "Little Simplicity" charmed her, as none of her fashionable, artificial friends did, and she would not hear of her going away at the end of a month, as both Philip and his intended wished to do, and which if they had done would have saved one of them a lifelong misery.

No, she had a fresh batch of guests coming, and she must show her wild rose, as she called Maggie, to them.

All this flattered her brother, pleased his vanity, which was great, and made him believe himself to be much more in love with her than he really was, and to this fact his eyes were somewhat rudely opened.

One soft, April day, when he had returned from a long walk across the daisy-pied fields, he found them all assembled as usual in the drawing-room, occupied with tea and scandal.

"There is an old friend of yours over there, Phil," whispered his sister, as she handed him some tea.

"Indeed. Who?"

"Go and see. She is sitting near the mirror."

"It is a she, then!"

"Of course. A he would not interest you much."

"No. Where is Maggie?"

"Out driving with Mrs. Pritchard. Have you no curiosity about this old friend?"

"Not the least little bit in the world. She doesn't interest me."

"Yet she used to once, I believe very much."

"Used she?"

"Yes."

"I daresay a good many women did in my salad days."

"This one was after your salad days."

"Ah!"

Something in his sister's tone and manner made him look round sharply, and his eyes met the magnificent dark orbs of—Blanche Ferrol!

There she sat, lovelier than ever; her dark brunette beauty set off by the rich ruby velvet gown she wore, softened at throat and wrists by creamy, priceless old lace. In truth, it was a regal face of Semitic type. Full red lips, slightly aquiline nose, velvety brown eyes, large, sleepy, sensuous, heavily fringed with jetty lashes, that swept the rounded cheeks, softly tinted, like the side of a sun-ripened peach; a finely moulded chin, set on a throat of ivory whiteness, looking whiter by contrast with the mass of raven hair gathered loosely in a knot at the back of the shapely head, and straying in little vine-like tendrils to the neck.

How beautiful she was!—how rarely beautiful!

It seemed to Forrester that she was fairer than when they had parted, some two years before. There was more depth in her whole expression—more soul in the melting eyes, richer colouring in the cheeks and lips. His hungry eyes devoured the beautiful face that had haunted him almost every hour since they had last met.

Could it be that he had lost her? Could it be that he had no longer the right to sit at her side, to hold her hand, to kiss her lips? Could it be that he was nothing to her, that another would some day, might even now, have the right to claim those delights he forfeited by his folly, and which he knew now he would give so much, all his earthly goods, to possess! He set his teeth, and breathed hard at the thought.

The strange fascination she had ever had for him deepened in her presence; he could not resist it, and forgetting all else—his plighted word, his girl-bride, his honour, all, he crossed to her side, and held in a long, close pressure the hand she offered him.

"I did not know you were here," she said, unconstrainedly, her woman's wit enabling her to conceal the emotion she felt at thus being suddenly confronted with the man whom she had—nay, that she did love with all the strength of her passionate nature.

"No! Does that mean you would not be here if you had known?" he queried, his dark face flushing.

"I—think—perhaps it does," she returned, with some hesitation.

"Perhaps we are fated to meet?" he whispered, in a low tone.

"Do you think so?" she answered, carelessly.

"I am sure of it. It is your destiny."

"Have you become a fatalist, Mr. Forrester?" she asked, a tinge of scorn in her clear tones.

"Only on one subject," he returned, pointedly. "I felt, I knew, that sooner or later we should meet again—meet, and our lives mingle once more in the stream of daily intercourse."

"Is that your fatalism?" she queried, with deeper scorn. "I could easily alter that by leaving here to-morrow, and giving you no clue to my whereabouts."

"You might, yet you will not."

"I think I may."

"No, you will not. You could not," he pleaded, softly, "will not wrest my new-found happiness from me. After weary months of despondency, could you be so cruel as to deprive me of the pleasure of your society?"

Her cheek grew deeper rose colour at his words; she trembled under the warmth and passion of his glance.

"Could you!" he reiterated. "Will you!"

"No," she answered, softly, "I will not."

"I knew you would not," and there was a wonderful gladness in his eyes and face as he looked at her—a gladness that boded ill for the future happiness of "Little Simplicity," and the woman at his side knew she had neither the power nor the inclination to banish him, to send him away from her for ever.

That night Blanche Ferrol did her utmost to enhance her brilliant beauty, and royally lovely she looked as she entered the drawing-room just before dinner, her amber robes sweeping out around her stately figure in graceful folds, diamonds clasping her polished throat, and rounded arms, and flashing amid the dusky tresses, a wonderful light in her soft, dark eyes, a tender smile curving the beautiful mouth, and irradiating her whole face.

Forrester involuntarily made a step forward but Maggie was on his arm, and Mrs. Henchfield introduced the sporting baronet to Blanche, and they all went into dinner at once.

Yet though the table, with its load of snowy drapery, and gleaming silver, and perfumed blossoms divided them, Philip found many opportunities of addressing Miss Ferrol, and of looking into her eyes and she, knowing nothing of his engagement, and feeling the old, warm passion stir strongly at her heart, banishing the pride that had kept them apart, returned his ardent glances and soft speeches, and was happy with a happiness she had not known for many a weary month—a joy that was exquisite bliss.

> "Perchance he may remember still,
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> So many changing currents fill
> Two lives that once have met!
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> I cannot vouch for love of men;
> One only thing I know,
> That still I love as I loved then,
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Miss Ferrol was singing, her clear full tones ringing through the room, and the heart of the man who bent over her with lover-like solicitude, turning the leaves, and looking into her eyes whenever he got the chance, while "Little Simplicity" sat alone in a corner, pretending to look at a book of photographs, and not quite understanding what it all meant, and why her lover was not at her side, instead of hanging over another woman.

She did not understand it, but neither did she understand many of the things passing around her. The talk of the fashionable world was so much jargon to her; the insuendoes, the risky *mots*, the thinly-veiled *double entendres* she did not comprehend, and the evil passed by her harmlessly, turned aside by the shield of her innocence.

Neither could she make out why women still young and handsome, her seniors by but a very few years, should redden their cheeks, and blacken their eyes, and pile false hair on to their little heads, and wear gowns, of which Talleyrand would surely have said, "*La robe commence trop tard, et finit trop tôt*," nor why it was necessary to change the said gowns five or six times a day. She had lived such a simple, guileless life that it was all incomprehensible to her, and at first she thought it was the proper thing for Philip to devote himself to the last new-comer, in an absolute fashion, and ignore her, but after a week or two a doubt crept into her innocent heart.

He was changed; she could hardly tell in what way, save that he showed a decided liking for Miss Ferrol's society, for when with her he struggled to be as tender and attentive as of yore, though his heart was not in it, and what chance would a modest guinea hen, in its sober garb of Quaker grey, have against a silver pheasant, gorgeous in its brilliant plumage!

Meeting again with Blanche opened his eyes to the true state of affairs, showed him that to her was given all the wild, strong love of his vigorous nature; while for Maggie he only cared as a brother might, for a tender, delicate, helpless thing.

He strove against the fatal fascination that was luring him on to dishonour, and he might have succeeded, only Fate was against him, and against the fair young girl, whose loving heart he had won.

She received a telegram one evening, towards the middle of May, saying that Robbie was ill, and summoning her home at once. Rising with trembling limbs she went in search of Philip, to tell him the news. As she passed one of Mrs. Henchfield's frisky young matron friends, the gay butterfly, looked up at her with jealousy and spite in her eyes, and hummed,—

> "Men were deceivers ever—
> One foot on sea, and one on shore,
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Maggie wondered, in a dull kind of way, why she looked at her and sung those lines; and then she went on through the drawing-room to the conservatory, but here the sound of voices arrested her steps, and held her spell-bound, for one was Philip's.

"Don't blame me too much," he was saying, pleadingly, and there was a ring in his tone, a tenderness such as she had never heard.

"I could not do that," returned a woman's voice, coldly and firmly. "You have deceived me cruelly."

"I could not help it."

"Could not help it! Pshaw! You need not have concealed the fact of your engagement to that poor child, Maggie Dawson."

"I could not tell you that."

"Why not?" she demanded, imperiously.

"Because when I met you again the scales fell from my eyes, I saw clearly—saw that I only cared for her as a plaything, and that the whole love of my heart, the devotion of my life, were yours."

"That is no excuse for your deceit."

"Ah! do not be so hard, so pitiless. You were, or I fancied you were, kinder, more gentle to me of late, and I longed so madly for your love again, hoped so wildly something might occur to set me free, to leave me at liberty to beg you to be once more my own, my wife, my all."

A faint sob rose to the listener's white lips at this.

"I may have softened towards you, in truth I will not deny that I did so," acknowledged Blanche, with proud humility. "Yet had I known, had I guessed even, at the tie that binds you to another, I should have been

CHAPTER IV.

Mr. Dawson was far from anxious to part with his treasure, his only daughter. He could have spared one of his boys, but Maggie—that was a different matter.

However, Forrester pleaded hard for his consent, and after a long and serious talk with his wife—who, despite the fact that it nearly broke her heart to even think of parting with her beloved daughter, knew what great advantages would accrue from such a match—he gave a reluctant consent, and Philip was received as a future son-in-law.

That winter passed as none other had ever done to Maggie. An enchanted world opened for her. She had never been so happy, she would never be so happy again, as in those brief days when the clouds were grey, and the air chill, the rivers and ponds frozen, and the earth covered with a mantle of snow.

What mattered leaden skies, and snow-covered earth, the cold and dearth around?

The roses of life were all abloom for her—perfumery, strong, sweet. She was rich in love, tenderly cared for, lived in a paradise full of sunshine, blossoms, and happiness. Her life was glorified, was crowded with aspirations, feelings, joys, which she had never before experienced, and which gave her rare delight.

Philip was a model lover, and Little Simplicity had nothing to complain of. He was devoted, kind, and attentive, and lavished presents on her to such an extent that she hardly knew what to do with them. There was no more any necessity for her to appear in her mother's refurbished old gowns, to wear black shoes, when white were the right thing, nor to use ugly fans that destroyed the harmony ofher appearance. No; her lover did not let her want for anything, and loaded her with jewellery, and nick-nacks, and pretty dresses and luxuries of which she had not even dreamed. And the light in the pansy eyes grew brighter, and the flush on the soft cheek deeper, and never had she looked so lovely.

The old, hard life of toil and striving and contriving was left behind to a great extent, and she and her dear ones tasted the sweets and pleasures that money can procure.

"Do you feel inclined to leave home for a month or six weeks?" asked her intended, one bright March morning, entering the schoolroom, where he generally found her on his arrival at the Rectory, with an open letter in his hand.

"I—I—don't—know!" she faltered, thinking it might separate her from him. "It would depend upon——"

"What?" he demanded, as she hesitated.

"Upon two—or three—things."

"What are they?"

"Where should I have to go, and would you come with me?"

"I can answer both these questions satisfactorily," he replied. "My sister Maud wants to make your acquaintance, and has invited you down to Henchfield, and I should go with you."

"Then I do feel inclined. There is nothing I should like better, or enjoy more."

"That is settled, then!"

"Oh; but Robbie, and—and—the boys."

"Well. What of them?"

"They would miss me so much, and there would be no one to look after baby," calling her youngest brother by his pet name.

"They will have to 'miss' you altogether some day, you know," he said, with a significance that brought the blood to her cheek.

"Yes,—I know," she faltered.

"Well, they had better begin at once, and I daresay Mrs. Dawson can manage Robbie for awhile."

"She is so busy," objected the dutiful daughter.

"Well, we must find her and speak to her about it."

And they did, and the unselfish woman at once said, "go" to her child, for she guessed intuitively what a disappointment not doing so would be to her. She assured Maggie that she would be able to look after and manage Robbie, though, in truth, her duties as a minister's wife left her scant leisure. Her mother's meetings, her sewing bees, her schools, her visits to the poor, and a hundred other calls on her time left her hardly a moment to herself, and she knew the sole charge of her youngest would be an onerous addition to her busy life; still she at once cheerfully accepted it.

When Maggie married it was an understood thing that Forrester would give them such help as would enable them to keep another servant as part nurse to the little fellow, and part assistant to Mrs. Dawson, but until he held the position of son-in-law such substantial assistance could not be accepted from him, as there is often in this life—too often, alas!—a slip 'twixt cup and lip, which shatters and destroys carefully laid plans. Maggie was quite ready to go, having heaps of pretty things, presents from Philip, and in less than a week she set off with him for Henchfield.

The journey was delightful to her, she had been about so little, and, moreover, taken with him it became supreme bliss. She was naively pleased with everything, and as he drove up the avenue of elms leading to his sister's place, in their dashing phaeton, which had met them at the station, and listened to her artless prattling, and looked into the pansy depths of her innocent eyes, so full of adoration for him, he felt a great calm joy steal over him, a sense of restfulness which he had not experienced since parting with Blanche Ferrol.

Afternoon tea was going on in the drawing-room. When they arrived it was full of people—a gay, chattering throng of idle butterflies, who sipped souchong, and daintily munched thin bread-and-butter, while they talked scandal, told racy stories, and highly flavoured *on dits* and tore their friends' and enemies' reputations to pieces with charming impartiality.

"And this is my little sister that is to be!" said Maud Henchfield, kissing the fair, childlike face.

"Yes. My future wife," said the brother.

"And a very charming one she will make. She's quite lovely, actually seraphic!" declared their hostess, in an audible aside to her guests in general.

"By Jove! that she is," muttered a plunger, with yellow moustaches, and big staring blue eyes.

"A regular clipper," murmured a sporting baronet, who stood next him.

"Never saw anything so pawfect," agreed a collegian, who being in his salad days admired everything and anything that men older than himself praised.

"She has the face of an angel," chimed in a clergyman, a fashionable person, whose Belgravian parishioners boasted no small share of good looks amongst them.

"Hope you are not jealous?" laughed Maud.

"Not in the least," returned Philip, though, in truth, he did feel somewhat annoyed at such outspoken praise of his promised bride—outspoken, yet meant to be veiled, because he saw she was covered with blushes, and confusion as much from the praise of the men as from the stony stares of envy, hatred, and malice with which the feminine portion of the community regarded her; and their looks were black indeed, for they scented mischief, and knew that Little Simplicity, with her fresh untouched beauty, would be a powerful rival, and take some of the lustre from their world-worn and slightly artificial charms.

"Let me find you a chair, and give you a cup of tea," suggested Mrs. Henchfield, who saw the gathering frown on her brother's brow.

"Thanks," murmured Maggie, too much overcome by the novelty of her position, and the stir she had caused, to be capable of saying more.

"Here is a nice, quiet corner, where you can see and yet not be seen, unless you like."

"Thanks," she repeated, sinking into the low chair by the corner jutting back from the mantelpiece, thankful to obtain some shelter from the volley of criticising looks.

After a time she summoned courage to look around, finding that everyone was chatting away vigorously, and had ceased to stare at her—that is to say, openly—for one or two of the men forgot their good breeding, and covertly stared hard.

It was a charming room—different from anything she had ever seen. Cosy, comfortable, slightly æsthetic, yet graceful and luxurious.

Heavy, gold-threaded curtains draped the windows, the *portieres* were of the same material, and the couches and chairs upholstered similarly. An ebony grand stood in one corner, a crimson plush easle supporting a mirror, beautifully painted, in another; brackets holding rare china adorned the walls, little tables were dotted about crowded with costly nick-nacks, Venetian glass, Dresden china, Benares brass-work, ivory carvings, antiques of all descriptions and kinks, and modern productions, both beautiful and fragile; masses of lovely flowers, hot-house blooms, were thrust with careless grace into vases and jars; tall palms stood in odd nooks, and delicate ferns in every available space and corner, and as a background, fairy-like, green, refreshing to the eye, was the conservatory, where the fountain threw up silvery jets into the air, which splashed down into the marble basin, where the gold fish disported themselves, with a musical murmur, and baskets of rare plants hung suspended by ornamental chains, and queer creeping things grew, and clung, and climbed.

"How are you getting on, little one?" asked her lover, making his way to her side after some time.

"Very well, thank you," she answered, shyly.

"Shall I get you some more tea?"

"No, thanks."

"Quite certain?"

"Quite."

"Then let me come and sit beside you, and tell you who the celebrities are. That is to say if you care to know. Do you?"

"Oh, yes, very much," she answered, readily, for she wanted to keep him at her side, though she did not much care about the celebrities.

"Who shall I begin with?"

"Anyone you like."

"Haven't you any curiosity about anyone present?"

"No, I don't think I have."

"Shows you've not mixed in the world much. What do you think of that stout lady in brown silk?"

"Not much. She looks commonplace."

"She does. Yet she is none other than Miss Finch, the celebrated authoress."

"Indeed!" said Maggie, studying her attentively. "I thought such a clever woman would look very different."

"So did I when I was as young as you are. I know better now—know that celebrities look very much like other people. That young fellow talking to her is a great admirer of Irving, and bearing a resemblance to him gets himself up to look like him, and recites bits out of Shakespeare. The man with the bald head and spectacles is Herr Shriekhen, the great German violinist, and the lady in blue silk, at his side, is the last new professional beauty, Miss Fredericks," and so on, and so on he went talking to her, trying to amuse and interest her, until Maud came and carried her off to her pretty bedroom, all blue satin and creamy lace, to dress for dinner, and told him to go and make himself presentable.

The room appeared too lovely to Maggie to be used as anything less than a boudoir. All the luxury and display overcame her, as did the attentions of a French maid whom Mrs. Henchfield sent to attend on her, and whose services she would far rather have dispensed with, but who, it must be acknowledged, dressed the abundant chestnut tresses to the greatest advantage, and gave several finishing touches, such as only a Parisian can, to the simple blue diaphanous gown Maggie selected from her stock, which added greatly to the loveliness of the young girl.

"*Mam'selle est gentille comme une ange*," murmured the maid, when she finished, and stood surveying the result of her pains, and so thought many of the men when the young girl appeared in the drawing-room: and they cast sundry envious glances at Philip as he led her into dinner, with an air of proprietorship, and devoted himself to her during the evening, to the exclusion of all others.

CHAPTER V.

LIFE was very bright at Henchfield. Day after day glided by, full of pleasure and enjoyment. Every moment was occupied pleasantly.

Maud was a capital hostess, her husband a model host, for he let his guests do just as they pleased, and never objected to the number his wife asked, or the length of their stay; and if she found anyone dull or uninteresting she soon managed to make them understand that they were out of their element under her hospitable roof, and had better "move on," which they invariably did, and were replaced by brighter and more attractive metal.

To Maggie she took a great fancy. "Little Simplicity" charmed her, as none of her fashionable, artificial friends did, and she would not hear of her going away at the end of a month, as both Philip and his intended wished to do, and which if they had done would have saved one of them a lifelong misery.

No, she had a fresh batch of guests coming, and she must show her wild rose, as she called Maggie, to them.

All this flattered her brother, pleased his vanity, which was great, and made him believe himself to be much more in love with her than he really was, and to this fact his eyes were somewhat rudely opened.

One soft, April day, when he had returned from a long walk across the daisy-pied fields, he found them all assembled as usual in the drawing-room, occupied with tea and scandal.

"There is an old friend of yours over there, Phil," whispered his sister, as she handed him some tea.

"Indeed. Who?"

"Go and see. She is sitting near the mirror."

"It is a she, then?"

"Of course. A he would not interest you much."

"No. Where is Maggie?"

"Out driving with Mrs. Pritchard. Have you no curiosity about this old friend?"

"Not the least little bit in the world. She doesn't interest me."

"Yet she used to once, I believe very much."

"Used she?"

"Yes."

"I daresay a good many women did in my salad days."

"This one was after your salad days."

"Ah!"

Something in his sister's tone and manner made him look round sharply, and his eyes met the magnificent dark orbs of—Blanche Ferrol!

There she sat, lovelier than ever; her dark brunette beauty set off by the rich ruby velvet gown she wore, softened at throat and wrists by creamy, priceless old lace. In truth, it was a regal face of Semitic type. Full red lips, slightly aquiline nose, velvety brown eyes, large, sleepy, sensuous, heavily fringed with jetty lashes, that swept the rounded cheeks, softly tinted, like the side of a sun-ripened peach; a finely moulded chin, set on a throat of ivory whiteness, looking whiter by contrast with the mass of raven hair gathered loosely in a knot at the back of the shapely head, and straying in little vine-like tendrils to the neck.

How beautiful she was!—how rarely beautiful!

It seemed to Forrester that she was fairer than when they had parted, some two years before. There was more depth in her whole expression—more soul in the melting eyes, richer colouring in the cheeks and lips. His hungry eyes devoured the beautiful face that had haunted him almost every hour since they had last met.

Could it be that he had lost her? Could it be that he had no longer the right to sit at her side, to hold her hand, to kiss her lips? Could it be that he was nothing to her, that another would some day, might even now, have the right to claim those delights he forfeited by his folly, and which he knew now he would give so much, all his earthly goods, to possess! He set his teeth, and breathed hard at the thought.

The strange fascination she had ever had for him deepened in her presence; he could not resist it, and forgetting all else—his plighted word, his girl-bride, his honour, all, he crossed to her side, and held in a long, close pressure the hand she offered him.

"I did not know you were here," she said, unconstrainedly, her woman's wit enabling her to conceal the emotion she felt at thus being suddenly confronted with the man whom she had—nay, that she did love with all the strength of her passionate nature.

"No! Does that mean you would not be here if you had known?" he queried, his dark face flushing.

"I—think—perhaps it does," she returned, with some hesitation.

"Perhaps we are fated to meet?" he whispered, in a low tone.

"Do you think so?" she answered, carelessly.

"I am sure of it. It is your destiny."

"Have you become a fatalist, Mr. Forrester?" she asked, a tinge of scorn in her clear tones.

"Only on one subject," he returned, pointedly. "I felt, I knew, that sooner or later we should meet again—meet, and our lives mingle once more in the stream of daily intercourse."

"Is that your fatalism?" she queried, with deeper scorn. "I could easily alter that by leaving here to-morrow, and giving you no clue to my whereabouts."

"You might, yet you will not."

"I think I may."

"No, you will not. You could not," he pleaded, softly, "will not wrest my new-found happiness from me. After weary months of despondency, could you be so cruel as to deprive me of the pleasure of your society?"

Her cheek grew deeper rose colour at his words; she trembled under the warmth and passion of his glance.

"Could you?" he reiterated. "Will you?"

"No," she answered, softly, "I will not."

"I knew you would not," and there was a wonderful gladness in his eyes and face as he looked at her—a gladness that boded ill for the future happiness of "Little Simplicity," and the woman at his side knew she had neither the power nor the inclination to banish him, to send him away from her for ever.

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A faint sob rose to the listener's white lips at this.

"I may have softened towards you, in truth I will not deny that I did so," acknowledged Blanche, with proud humility. "Yet had I known, had I guessed even, at the tie that binds you to another, I should have been

colder than stone, and never shown you the regret I felt at having treated you harshly in the past."

"And you did regret it?" he questioned eagerly.

"I did," she said calmly.

"Oh! Heaven. We might have been so much to each other," he groaned; "and now——"

"Now we must part," she said, firmly.

"Blanche!"

"There is no other alternative."

"I must lose you now that I know you care for me more than you did of yore!"

"Yes."

"How hard it is. Have you no pity?" he pleaded.

"Do you forget that poor child whose affections you have won?"

"Alas! no. Poor child! But she cannot love as we love."

"You don't know. You cannot judge the depth of feeling in any human heart save your own."

"True. Still I hope and think she does not."

"Yours for me must be very strong when you could pain me as you have done."

"Be merciful, Blanche. Man is weak, and I was sorely tempted."

"You should have resisted temptation."

"I know. I must appear despicable in your eyes. Only try me now. Command anything, no matter how hard; I will obey your orders, to prove my faithfulness."

"Then return to your rightful allegiance. Go to that trusting child, and never look on me again."

"Blanche!"

There was a world of agony in that one word. They stood facing each other in the flower-scented room, all the air heavy with the breath of exotics, love's own perfect hour, 'twixt sunset and moonrise; and the witchery of the hour was on them, the subtle spell, the resistless influence that forced her into his arms, when he stretched them out, saying, "One kiss, in pity, before I go;" and made her raise her lips to his. But ere they met in a long clinging kiss the unhappy watcher, with a low cry, turned and fled from the sight she dared not look on—fled to the solitude of her room, to try and still the throbbing of her aching heart, before she sought Mrs. Henchfield to beg her to assist her in returning to the Rectory.

With white face, and tearless eyes, at last she rose, and calming herself sought Maud's room. Her hostess was all sympathy, and did her best to assist her in starting at once. She suggested sending for Philip to escort her to Oakdale, but Maggie so firmly negatived this that she gave in almost at once, for she was not blind to what was going on around, and guessed that there was something more, which had given that stricken look to the girl's face than the telegram, and accounted for her eagerness to get away alone. So she despatched her own maid with her, assuring her that she would explain everything satisfactorily to her brother.

(*Continued on page* 160.)

A LITTLE GUST.

—:o:—

Miss Parthenia Crosby tied her sorrel pony into his stable, pulled down a bundle of hay for him, gathered up her riding-skirt and strolled into the house.

She looked about her with widely-opened black eyes. To a young lady, who, until four months before, had looked off every day at a misty, grey spur of the Mendips, there was a novel fascination in knowing that the creek winding through the adjoining farm—there was not another house in sight—would find its way finally, by a crooked course, into the Trent itself. There was a novel fascination in everything, because everything was a couple of hundred miles from home.

Miss Crosby sauntered up the long broad walk and in at the kitchen door.

A young woman, with dark eyes and a fresh colour like her own, gave her a nod over the manly garments she was mending; and a tall young man, with a boyish, good-humoured face and a certain loose-jointedness, got up from his chair hastily and snatched off the hat which he had not hitherto removed.

Miss Parthenia looked at him with a sparkling brightness. Perhaps there was a shade of mockery in the smile which turned up the corners of her well-cut mouth and displayed a dimple in her pink cheek. And, indeed, if Joel Simmons was not positively awkward, there was a modest shyness about him at which a self-possessed and rather airy young lady might not unreasonably smile.

"Where have you been, Par?" said the young woman, commencing on another patch briskly. "Joel has been waiting two hours."

Joel blushed. Parthenia sank into a chair collectedly, tossed her masculine-looking little hat on to the table, patted her roughened hair, and gave a jerk to the folds of her dress.

Even when one's affections are by no means concerned, it is not necessary that one should look like a fright.

"Where have I been?" said Parthenia. "Over to Ashbourne and right down the Derby Road."

The young man laughed, with his shy, blue eyes fixed admiringly upon her.

"If I'd known you were going," he said, "I'd have taken flipper and gone along."

Parthenia gave him a little smile and bow.

"There would have been three of us," she observed. "Mr. Moretown overtook me at Ashbourne, and left me at the gate."

She looked at the toe of her shoe.

Joel blushed again—this time hotly and painfully. He kept his eyes on her blooming, young face in a worried way, but he did not attempt to speak.

"Joel came down, Par," said her sister (there was a shade of entreaty in her tone), "to see when you want to go over to Dovedale."

"Dovedale!" said Parthenia, lightly. "Mr. Moretown was speaking of it. He's going to bring his trap round this afternoon and take me over."

She got up and fluttered about aimlessly for a moment; it might have been to escape the young man's hurt and harassed gaze.

Then she went into the pantry adjoining, and came out with a bowl of vivid red apples. She did not find her caller; he had taken an abrupt departure.

She burst into pretty high-pitched laughter.

"Oh, Sally," she cried, gaspingly, "I never shall get used to your Midland customs!"

"Par," said her sister, soberly, "it's high time you behaved yourself. Joel's meek enough, goodness knows, where you're concerned; but he won't stand everything."

Parthenia raised her brows, and bit into an apple.

"Par," said her sister, with a quick alarm, "you don't mean to say—you don't—that you really enjoy that wretched little Morestown?"

"Mr. Moretown is a very pleasant person," Parthenia responded, with a non-committal sweetness.

"He's a little beast!" said her sister, warmly; "and he's visiting the Browns because he's nowhere else to go. He hasn't a farthing——"

"I never was mercenary," Parthenia interpolated, with a saintly smile.

"And Joel," her sister pursued—"Joel is the very best fellow in the world, and with that immense farm and his interest in the coal-mines."

Parthenia took another apple.

"Moretown is a nicer name than Simmons," she observed, flippantly.

"Oh, Par!" her sister murmured. "I wish I hadn't invited you here!"

Parthenia tripped to the door and hung herself on the arm of a big fellow coming in.

Sally Crosby had married Fred Wilson and gone to Derbyshire with him, chiefly because it had not occurred to her to refuse so high and broad a lover.

"Shall she rave about Joel Simmons and slander Mr. Morestown!" cried Parthenia, standing on tiptoe to look pathetically at him.

"By no means," said her brother-in-law, obligingly. "Moretown is a distinguished and high-born gentleman, and an ornament to the community; and Joel—we all know that Joel is a blood-thirsty, red-handed villain."

Parthenia laughed guiltily.

"She is going to Dovedale with him, Fred," said his wife, despairingly. "Say that she shall not. Say that it is going to rain."

"Oh, it won't rain!" said Parthenia, biting into her third apple.

Indeed, the day was a model of fineness at three o'clock that afternoon. The sun, softened from its noonday brightness, sent a slanting mellowed flood of light across the world, and took the keenness out of the air; the sky was guiltless of a cloud.

Parthenia, in a snug blue jacket and a hat with a tall bird, leaned forward from her seat at Mr. Moretown's side to dilate upon the beauty or the grandeur, or the uniqueness of the objects they passed—objects which did not possess these qualities in a high degree, but which might easily appear to, to an enthusiastic young lady from the East.

Her companion listened passively. He was a small, dark man, rather full about the chin and rather red about the eyelids. Side by side with Parthenia's pink-and-white freshness he looked somewhat old and sallow; but at thirty-eight one cannot be expected to retain all one's youthful charms.

Perhaps a contrasting vision of Joel Simmons—tall, fair-haired, and ruddy—might have presented itself to Parthenia's quickly observant mind; but there is no proof of the fact.

The streamlets gurgled and spattered and splashed down their stony shelf in obvious indifference to the circumstance of two more sight-seers having come to gape at them.

Parthenia stood on the bank with clasped hands and glowing, upraised eyes, in an ecstasy of delighted approval; or she flitted about briskly and untiringly, to get all the different views.

She threw pebbles into the water and tried to trace their downward course; she pulled off her glove and leaned forward to hold her hand under the spray; she picked grasses and a sprig of peppermint for mementoes.

Mr. Moretown sat on a dry rock and watched her. He was not very responsive to her rapturous questions—he had not given much attention to the Dovedale—and he was rather relieved than otherwise when she declared with a glance at the fast sinking sun and a little shriek, that they ought to have started home long ago. In fact the place was damp, and he felt a twinge of rheumatism in his left shoulder.

Parthenia took the reins from his hands as they drove away, and touched up the horse with a laughing word.

It was not an easy matter to have a lively time with Mr. Moretown. He appeared to have passed his days of liveliness; he looked at his sparkling companion with a dull, red-rimmed eye of inquiry.

But Parthenia chatted and laughed for three miles in gay self-sufficiency. Then she became aware that Mr. Moretown was fidgeting in his seat and coughing nervously, and staring around and above him.

"Look at that sky, Miss Crosby!" he said. His voice was shaky.

Parthenia looked. The soft grey of the heavens had grown darker; the brightness of the day had been suddenly overcast. A ragged cloud was struggling up in the west and obscuring the sun.

To Parthenia's uninitiated eyes the change was not momentous.

"It's going to rain," she observed, tranquilly.

"Rain!" her companion repeated. (Parthenia stared at him wonderingly; his teeth were chattering.) "It's going to blow a terrible gale, and we're a mile from anywhere!"

He grasped the reins and laid the whip on the horse.

"Dear me!" murmured Parthenia.

She was not much impressed; she watched the excited little man amusedly.

They rattled along. The darkness of the sky spread itself through the air; the twilight seemed deepening into night with unnatural rapidity. The cloud over the sun took on a dense, greenish blackness; there was an odd sound, like the distant breathing of some monster, and the dust began to fly.

Mr. Moretown stood up in the trap and leaned over as he lashed the horse.

"The inn's a quarter of a mile down!" he gasped. "Oh, heavens!"

The horse plunged on, with ears laid back and quivering limbs.

A flying fence-rail planted itself in his path, and he stopped affrightedly, standing stock still under the fierce fall of blows.

Mr. Moretown muttered incoherently under his breath. Then he threw down the reins and leaped from the trap.

"Come along, Miss Crosby!" he screamed. "It's our only chance; it's our last——"

His voice was lost in the rush of the wind.

Parthenia looked after him amazedly as he struggled up the road, staggering from side to side, a dim blot in the dust and darkness.

She could feel the trap shake beneath her, and she stepped down from it instinctively. The horse was trembling and pawing the ground. She seized him by the bit and stroked his nose and looked helplessly about her.

A tree stood two rods away. She made her way to it—almost lifted from her feet by the savage force of the wind—leading the shrinking horse. It was a swirling blackness all about her.

She threw an arm around the tree and laid her face upon it to shut out the uncanny sight. She heard a rain of light missiles against the trap, and the crashing fall of heavy limbs.

"Parthenia—Par—— Oh, my dear, are you hurt!" a hoarse voice shouted in her ear.

She looked up into Joel Simmons's face, close to her own.

She could not make out in the dimness that he was wild-eyed and haggard, that his hat was gone, and that there was a bruise on his cheek.

He grasped her arm lightly. In the excitement of the moment he slipped his hand downward to her waist. In the excitement of the moment she clung to him with both her own.

"I've been looking for you," he said simply. "I wouldn't trust you out of sight with that —— Where is he?" he broke off.

"Gone to the inn," she responded, with experimental gravity.

Joel's face darkened.

"We'll go straight home, then," he announced, grimly. "We won't stop there."

Her clear laugh rang out oddly enough on the riotous air.

"Did you think I cared for him!" she cried.

She reached up, still laughing, to stroke his ruffled hair.

"It's easing up; we can go in a minute," he said, rather weakly.

So sudden a *douche* of happiness had a strangely debilitating effect.

* * * * *

Fred Wilson was reading a paper by the light of a lamp in the sitting-room. He had a window open, and he seemed indifferent to the dirt and miscellany that had whirled into the room. He greeted his sister-in-law with composure.

"Where did you find her, Joel?" he inquired, unexcitedly. "Scared out of her wits by that little, spindling gust, I suppose!"

"Where is Sally!" murmured Parthenia.

"In the kitchen," her husband responded, in the tone of one whose disgust had grown into resignation.

Parthenia went to the cellar door.

"She'll be ridiculously glad, Joel," she said, with a frowning, smiling, backward glance.

DOLLY'S LEGACY.

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CHAPTER VII.

FACE to face they stood there, alone in the solitude of the grounds. There by the bank of the river, in whose waters the last Countess Desmond had found her death, stood Herbert Sinclair and our little heroine—the one with a bitter conflict raging at his heart, the other lost in a silent rapture, wondering what made the world so fair.

How could he tell her? How could he breathe the story of his own folly and disgrace into her pure ears? How sully her innocence by the knowledge of his miserable secret? How could he tell her, and how could he give her up?

"Dolly!"

The girl raised her velvet eyes wistfully to his face—the strange solemnity in his voice troubled her.

"Do you trust me, sweet?"

"Better than my own self," she murmured, "better than any one in the world!"

He still held her hand.

"I love you Dolly," he went on, passionately; "but for a little while I dare not avow my love boldly before the world. When Lord Desmond comes home I can not go to him, and ask him to give you to me. Darling, can you be content for our happiness to be a secret just for the present?"

Dolly smiled.

"Is that all?" she whispered. "I began to fear you were going to tell me of some dreadful calamity. I would rather no one knew; it is nicer far to keep our happiness to ourselves, only"—here her voice almost broke—"I wish you were not going away!"

"I shall come back, Dolly, if not to the Castle to the village. I can take lodgings there, and haunt this spot for my picture. No one will guess that art is no longer my attraction, and that I have found something nearer and dearer."

A distant clock was chiming. The sound smote terror into Dolly's heart.

"I must go."

"I cannot spare you yet."

"I must, indeed. I shall be wanted."

"By whom so much as me, I wonder?"

"Mab will be impatient."

"I wish I could take you away," he cried, passionately—"I wish I could make you my own at once."

But he was obliged to own it was getting late. With many a fond adieu, many a warm caress, he went with her to the end of the shrubbery; then they parted.

Herbert had an instinctive desire to shield his darling from even the breath of scandal, and he would not be walking at her side so late in any spot overlooked by the windows of the Castle.

Dolly sped on quickly, the crimson shawl wrapped round her uncovered head framed but did not hide her sweet, wistful face. Never had she looked lovelier than at this moment, the bright light of happiness in her eyes, a faint pink flush on her cheeks!

She sped on quickly, looking neither to the right nor left, intent only on regaining the house, when, just as she stood by the entrance to the west wing, a hand was laid upon her arm.

"Not so fast, Red Riding Hood. What is all this haste about? You are much too pretty to run away like this."

The first sound of the voice told her the danger she had so feared when she heard of Lord Devereux's coming had actually arrived. It was the Viscount's hand that held her in a grim, vice-like clasp—it was his handsome, evil face so near her own.

She gave a little cry of alarm.

"Be quiet," reproved Devereux. "How you tremble! Why," as he drew her into the hall beneath the light of a large lamp—"will wonders ever cease!—it's my *rara avis* of Regent-street, my proud sorgstress of Kensington!"

"For pity's sake, let me go!"

"I am far too pleased to renew our acquaintance. I must say I am surprised to find you here. I gather things have looked up with you since New Year's night or I should not see you in my father's house, or"—and he smiled wickedly—"did you regret your cruelty to your humble servant, and come here in search of me?"

"I never knew you lived here."

"You haven't answered my question."

"Which one?"

"What are you doing here?"

"I am Lady Mabel's companion."

"Who sent you here?"

"Mrs. Pemberton."

Devereux whistled.

"I think it's the first good turn that lady ever did me. Of course, you'll spare me a little of your charming society, Miss Smith?"

"I shall do no such thing."

"You'll have to."

"Are you a man?" cried Dolly, stung past endurance by his manner. "Aren't you ashamed to persecute a poor helpless girl. You may be an earl's son, but your conduct is a disgrace to your rank."

"Your temper does not match your face," said Devereux, agreeably. "If you were not such a little beauty I might wash my hands of such a spitfire; but I always admired a pretty woman, and so I put up with your airs and graces."

Once again she struggled in his grasp; then she raised her voice almost unconsciously in her anguish.

"Oh, let me go!" she cried, "let me go!"

Herbert Sinclair heard that cry as he was crossing the hall; another moment and he was at Dolly's side.

"Devereux, are you beside yourself?" he said, sharply, "to insult your sister's friend?"

"We don't want your interference, Sinclair," said the Viscount. "I assure you this young lady is an old acquaintance of mine."

"Then you had better choose another time for your interview. It is getting late, and Miss Smith is evidently alarmed."

Reluctantly enough Lord Devereux released Dolly's hand, hissing his farewell into her ears,—

"Remember, we meet again!"

The terrified girl made no answer. She tore away as fast as her feet would carry her, and never stopped until she found herself in Mabel's bedroom, kneeling by the child's little white bed.

"What is it?" asked Mab, sleepily. "Dolly, where have you been? I have wanted you so!"

"In the grounds," confessed Miss Smith.

"In the grounds!" repeated the child, wonderingly, "at this time? Why, it is past ten o'clock!"

Poor Dolly! She could read bewilderment and suspense in Mab's very voice, but she could not speak in her own defence. She was too faint and heart-sick.

Herbert Sinclair loved her. The thought was happiness, but, alas! Lord Devereux had discovered her. She could expect nothing but misery at his hands. He would tell her lover how he had seen her last, singing for money in the public streets. Would even Herbert's tenderness survive such a disclosure!

She need not have feared. When she awoke a little note was on her dressing-table—only a line, but it allayed her terror.

"Sweetheart, will you meet me at our first trysting-place before breakfast? I have much to tell you."

She was early at the spot, but, early as she was, she found him there. Herbert opened his arms and gathered her to himself.

"My darling!"

"Has he told you?" she breathed.

"Told me what, Dolly?" as he gathered her meaning. "Do you think I would listen to Lord Devereux, or allow him to take your name upon his lips?"

"I meant to tell you myself," she whispered, "only last night I was so happy!"

So happy! Herbert Sinclair trembled as he heard the words. He knew he had behaved like a villain the night before, and yet he had made this sweet, trustful girl "so happy!"

"Tell me what you will," he said, fondly; "only remember, Dolly, it makes no difference. Nothing can change the one fact—I love you!"

She told him her story; she kept back nothing; how she had been a dressmaker's assistant; how she had sung for alms; and how, through all, John Devereux had been a black shadow on her path.

"He is a bad man," she said, simply; "he says he loves me, but, Herbert, he cannot. He is engaged to a beautiful young lady."

"And you think, child, a man may not love one woman and be bound to another!" said Herbert feverishly.

"Don't talk like that; it is almost as though you believed Lord Devereux."

"I don't believe him, Dolly; and be very sure of one thing—I will never yield you to him. He would bring you nothing but misery."

He sighed as he spoke. He did not mean to yield his darling to the Viscount. He meant to keep her for his own; and yet, as he had said to her of Devereux, and even might say to her of himself, "he could bring you nothing but misery."

"Do you think——" she stopped abruptly.

"Do I think what, child? Surely you are not afraid of me, Dolly?"

"Do you think Lord Devereux will persuade his mother to send me away?"

"I think not. But if she did?"

Dolly's eyes filled with tears.

"I should have no home—I should be a lonely little wanderer from everything good and pleasant."

"You would come to me," he said, persuasively. "Dolly, if you left Field Royal it would only be to share my life. Don't fret yourself with anticipating trouble, darling. Can't you trust me to make you happy?"

She did trust him. She went home with a strange gladness shining in her eyes—not even the sight of Lord Devereux sitting at breakfast with Mab shook his trust.

"Devereux has come to see us," said Mab, joyously. "He says he had no idea we were here; and, Dolly, he has been singing to me himself."

Dolly felt as if Mab had gone over to the enemy, and yet she could not blame the child. Lady Mabel had one of those confiding natures which respond to kindness as the flowers do to sunshine. Half-an-hour's careless good-nature from Viscount Devereux had made her forget all his previous slights.

He showed to greater advantage now than Dolly had ever seen him. He lingered another hour in the schoolroom, and he exerted himself to be agreeable. In spite of all his faults there was a certain fascination in his gay, bright manner and careless, wooing tones. He was a man who rarely troubled himself to please, and yet, when he did so, succeeded far better than many worthier men.

There was nothing in his behaviour Dolly could resent; nothing she could possibly allege to Mab against him. If his eyes never left her face, and he held her hand longer than was necessary when he bade her good-morning, this was hardly an offence she could explain to a child.

"The Castle will be free in a few days," said Lord Devereux, carelessly. "The men I have staying with me are due in London next week, then I shall have more time for you, Mab. I think you are the best of my sisters, child, though you haven't been educated at a fashionable boarding school."

Mab felt intensely flattered. She seemed to have taken suddenly a great fancy to her brother, and she was a little hurt that Dolly would not share it.

"You forget, my lady," said Mrs. Bond, coming to the rescue when she saw her favourite hard pressed. "Miss Smith has only seen Lord Devereux once. He is not her brother, as he is yours."

Mab looked relieved.

"I thought Dolly might remember all I said against him," she remarked, gravely. "I am sure he is very nice now."

"She'll be a child all her days," said the old housekeeper, when she was alone with Dolly. "The Viscount's just what he used to be, only from some cause or other he's chosen to show her a little tenderness. I can't make out what he hopes to gain by it, but he's not a man to do anything from good nature. Now, Mr. Sinclair is quite a different gentleman."

Dolly blushed hotly, and wished her lover's name had not such a power to move her colour.

"Mr. Sinclair," went on the garrulous old woman, "would never raise a hope he didn't mean to gratify. They say he means to marry one of our young ladies. I doubt if it's true myself, but if he does she'll be a happy woman."

"Whose felicity are you predicting!"

The question came from Herbert himself. He had entered unperceived in time to hear her last words.

Mrs. Bond was in no wise taken aback.

"Your lady, Mr. Sinclair. I was just telling Miss Smith your wife would be a happy woman."

Dolly expected him to make some light, laughing remark, but to her surprise he looked grave and stern.

He made no answer to the old housekeeper. He waited till she had gone, then he took Dolly's hands into his.

"I have come to say good-bye."

"Good-bye!"

"Yes, my darling; I leave Field Royal in an hour."

"But I thought you were going to stay till next week! I am sure you said so."

"And I believed it. Dolly, I have just had a furious quarrel with Devereux, and I cannot break bread in his house again."

She was white and trembling.

Very tenderly Herbert put her in a chair, and stood bending over her.

"I can't help thinking he wanted to pick a quarrel with me. He began on every subject he knew would be distasteful to me, and at last he used words I could not pass over."

Dolly nestled a little closer to his side.

"You won't fight a duel!" she said, appealingly. "Oh! Herbert, do promise me!"

"I promise you," he answered. "But, Dolly, Devereux and I can never meet as friends again."

"And you are going!"

"I have no choice. It breaks my heart to leave you, but after all it may be the best means of helping forward our future. I must find a home for my treasure and prepare it for her. I can do that better in London than at Field Royal."

"And you are quite sure?"

"Of what?"

"That you want me."

"Yes," he said, very gravely. "So sure that I would run any risks to win you. And you, Dolly, are you sure too? Sure that my love can make you happy?"

"I want nought else."

"It is all I can give you," he said, with a strange yearning regret that was almost a sob. "I would make you a princess if I could. I would crown you a queen; and yet, Dolly, I am powerless. I cannot offer you a title or a coronet. I can give you only love."

"And love is best of all."

"May you ever think so."

"I know I shall. I can't explain it, Herbert, only I seem to feel I am not one to change."

Then he told her of his plans. He was going to London to make some needful preparations. So soon as Viscount Devereux should have left Field Royal he would return to Northshire and put up at the village inn. Then he would take Dolly away with him, and they would begin their new bright life together.

"Only you must tell no one," he enjoined; "it is our secret, remember, Dolly—yours and mine."

"But when I am going away," pleaded Dolly, a little aghast, "surely I may tell Mab then!"

"No."

"But to say good-bye to her!"

"You can write to her afterwards."

"She will be so hurt."

"It is the only plan, Dolly. No one must ever know our secret until the sea is between us and England."

Dolly trembled.

"Could they part us!"

"I think so."

Oh! the pent-up sadness of his voice! Oh! the deep regret in his dark eyes.

"It is not my fault, Dolly," he cried, passionately. "I cannot help myself. If I had my own way I would marry you before all the world. You should have six bridesmaids, and the noblest names in England should do honour to my bride, but I can't help myself. I am bound hand and foot by a chain I am powerless to break."

"Do you mean you are in debt!"

He smiled sadly.

"Heavily in debt," thinking of the promises he had made before he ever saw her face.

"I must try and be no expense," she whispered. "Oh! Herbert, I will do my best to help you."

"I know you will. Only child, you understand why your wedding must be a secret one, why you must tell no one in the world you are my bride."

And thinking of his debts and poverty, which she believed in, she answered, "I understand."

"And now good-bye. Ah, Dolly, when I came to Field Royal how little I thought what I should find there. Child, I think it must have been love at first sight. Oh, little girl, Heaven pardon me if I am bringing sorrow upon your golden head!"

"I can bear anything with you," she whispered.

Another moment and he was gone. The schoolroom looked duller and more dreary to Dolly than it had ever done before, as she threw herself wearily into a chair and flattened her small face against the window, resolved not to leave her post until she had seen the last of her hero.

CHAPTER VIII.

After that morning things went sadly for Dolly. Before the advent of Herbert Sinclair she had not been unhappy at Field Royal. Quiet and monotonous as the life was it suited her. The peaceful home, the exemption from all pecuniary cares, had been precious to her; and she had borne with all Lady Mabel's whims with exemplary patience because she felt the child loved her. But from the moment Viscount Devereux set foot in the west wing Mab changed. She had one of those jealous, sensitive natures that can rarely care for two people at once. She had cared for Dolly passionately until it dawned upon the jealous little brain that Miss Smith and Mr. Sinclair cared more for each other than for her. She was moping over this idea when her brother appeared, and, instead of alighting her as he had been accustomed to do, seemed disposed to make much of her. Poor Mab straightway transferred her devotion to him, and became cold and querulous in her manner to Dolly.

Ivor Vernon and Mr. Dugdale speedily followed Herbert Sinclair, the Viscount, to everyone's surprise, remained behind and devoted himself to his little sister and her friend.

He seemed to have changed his tactics; he never said a word to Dolly that she could take umbrage at, and yet his whole manner annoyed her. A dozen times a day she wished he would leave Field Royal—a dozen times a day she wondered what was the reason of his quarrel with her lover.

She was to be enlightened on the last point soon. Mab was drawing one afternoon when she suddenly regretted her friend's absence.

"If only Mr. Sinclair was here he would show me how to do this tree. Jack, will he come back soon?"

"Herbert Sinclair will never come back here, Mab," said the Viscount, shortly.

"Never! But I thought he was such a friend of mamma's! and you know, Jack, he is very nice."

"I don't think so."

"Why do you speak so angrily?"

"You wouldn't understand, child! Sinclair is a dishonourable scoundrel."

"You would not dare to call him such to his face," came in a girl's clear, defiant tones. "I wonder you are not ashamed to defame the absent."

Of course Dolly was the speaker, her violet eyes flashing with passionate indignation. She looked at Lord Devereux scornfully; it was the first time she had voluntarily addressed to him any but the shortest and most necessary remarks.

"Wrong for once, Miss Smith," said the Viscount, coolly. "I addressed the very words which have so displeased you to Mr. Sinclair."

Dolly's face pa'ed.

"You did not dare."

"I did; I have no cause to fear him. There is no ugly secret in my life."

"And you would dare to hint there is such a secret in his!"

"I would take my oath of it."

Mab looked up puzzled.

"Has he done anything wrong?"

"Nothing you would understand, child. Miss Smith, don't you think a man dishonourable who woos a woman he can never make his wife?"

Dolly's eyes flashed.

"I thought it was a favourite pastime of yours," she said, coldly.

He crossed over to her side; Mab in the window with her sketching was as much removed from them as though she had been in another room.

"And you can say that to me—you for whose sake I broke off my engagement to the Lady Madelaine Charteris?"

"If your engagement is broken off, I, at least, had nothing to do with it," she said, simply.

"I did it only for your sake; you would not listen to me. I wanted to show you I was free."

A silence long and deep. Dolly sat with one hand shading her face; she did not believe one word of Lord Devereux's protestations of his own devotion; she scorned his accusations of her lover. And yet she yearned with passionate longing for the sight of Herbert's face, the sound of his voice.

Lord Devereux thought her overwhelmed by his generosity, and decided he had turned the note in his pocket, by which Madelaine terminated their engagement, to a very good account indeed.

"She'll come to her senses in a few months," he thought to himself, "and meanwhile I can spend my time very pleasantly in caging this little wild bird. It's nonsense to think she cares for Sinclair, as if I could not cut him out. Having a rival gives just the spin of excitement to the affair it wanted."

"I am free," said the Viscount, in low thrilling tones; "for your sake I have broken my troth to one of the proudest heiresses in England. I am free, and I only ask a smile from you."

"You ask too much."

"Think what I can offer you," he went on, petulantly; "from a poorly-paid dependent I can make you a peeress—the future mistress of Field Royal!"

"I wish for no such honours."

"Perhaps you think Sinclair will come back to you. Bah! You don't know what fickle fellows artists are; every pretty face takes their fancy."

"Possibly."

"Are you mad enough to think yourself engaged to Sinclair?"

She dared not answer "yes." For the first time her lover's injunction to secrecy weighed hard on her. Her eyes dropped beneath the Viscount's gaze, but she said nothing.

"You see," said Devereux, triumphantly, "you cannot answer me! He was only amusing himself; why should you wear the willow for him? Do you know you are in my power!" went on Lord Devereux, mockingly. "A word from me can send you a homeless wanderer into the streets."

"Then speak it!" cried Dolly, defiantly: "Field Royal is not such a pleasant home to me I should regret leaving it!"

"My mother returns next week," went on the Viscount; "she is a woman of strong prejudices, most particular as to the proprieties of life; I think she would shudder in her bed she knew a street singer was her daughter's friend and companion."

"You can tell her."

"I shall not do so unless you drive me to it! I have too much regard for that golden head to bring down such a storm upon it! Only be reasonable, and——"

They were interrupted. Mab turned round from the window with a startled cry,—

"There is a carriage coming up the avenue loaded with luggage, and—yes, really! I can see a fly behind it! Oh, Devereux! what does it mean! Her mamma come home!"

"Positively," said the Viscount. "She never does things like other people. I'll go and see," Then as he passed Dolly's chair he whispered, "You must make your choice which I am to be—friend or foe! I warn you, you will find my mother a hard woman when she is displeased."

From the bottom of her heart Dolly regretted the return of Mabel's parents. Painful as her position had been the last week Lord and Lady Desmond's presence at Field Royal would add to her perplexities. Now it was easy for her to receive her lover's letters and post her own replies; how would it be with the Countess at home! Besides, when the most important letter of all came, when she received the tidings that her lover had returned and was waiting for her at the village inn, how should she steal away to meet him, with an overseer so sharp and exacting as was, from all accounts, Matilda, Lady Desmond!

But the introduction to her employers was delayed longer than she had anticipated.

After four months' absence the Countess had a great deal to arrange and inspect; besides, her elder girls were at home, and one or two eligible men had been "picked" up on the Continent and brought to Northshire, so that beyond a hasty visit to Mab in her own room, Lady Desmond really had very little time to trouble herself about the affairs of her youngest child.

The schoolroom was left very much to itself save for the Viscount's visits.

Dolly was coming to the conclusion she need not have so lamented the family's return, when one morning brought her a letter from her lover, banishing every other thought.

Herbert wrote tenderly; there was nothing in that. His letters always breathed the most devoted affection, but generally there was about them a strain of sadness, an underlying tone of melancholy, which told that the truth of which he had hinted to his *fiancee* was a very real one, and no mere creature of a fevered imagination.

But there was no sadness, no melancholy, about this latest letter; its every line breathed exultation. He assured Dolly the clouds had rolled back from their pathway, and that their future would be as bright and untroubled as an Italian sky; and then he wound up by assuring her again and again of his love for her, and promising that three days after the receipt of this letter she would find him once more in their old trysting-place by the silvery waters of the river Way.

It was an ideal love-letter, tenderness and fidelity breathed in every line.

It was very precious to Dolly, and yet it did not make her happy.

When Herbert had been fearful and downcast about their future, his alarm had never touched her; when he held her in his arms and asked her if she could be content with love, and love only, she had felt no fear, but now the shadow of his uneasiness fell upon her. Even as she read his words of joyous fondness, his exulting prophecy that very soon they would be together, to part no more, she shuddered; at the very moment when her lover had told her their happiness was certain, she trembled; when she ought to have been confident she was alarmed.

She never doubted Herbert's love, never from the instant their lips met for the first time did she doubt that she knew her whole heart was his, and yet, such is the strength of a nervous presentiment, in the very moment her happiness seemed near fruition an awful certainty came to her that the cup of joy would never reach her lips, that not for her was the precious title of Herbert Sinclair's wife.

Lord Devereux's taunts came back to her. She remembered now he had sworn Herbert was not free. She never believed the slander—never for an instant—and yet she seemed to know, by a marvellous instinct, that she and her lover would never be nearer to each other than they were now—that though they might stand together at Heaven's altar they would yet never be true man and wife. Some avenging fall would strike one of them with sudden death, or some other calamity would part them.

"Dolly," said Mab's voice, plaintively, for about the third time, "Dolly, why won't you speak to me!"

By an effort Dolly collected her thoughts. She crushed her letter in her pocket, and strove to come back to the things of everyday life.

"Were you saying anything, Mab?"

"I was telling you of Mr. Sinclair's good fortune. Mrs. Bond told me last night when I was in bed. Don't you care to hear it?"

"Very much."

She supposed it to be the cause of the elation of his letter, little recking that it was owing to no worldly honours present or to come.

"Some old great-uncle whom he had never seen has died suddenly," said Mab, "and now Mr. St. Clair's father is a duke. He will be a duke himself if he lives long enough."

Dolly smiled.

"He couldn't be nicer than he is," she said, with just a touch of fond appropriation in her voice, "and Sinclair is a very pretty name."

"It isn't his name any longer; at least no one will call him by it. His father is Duke of Portess, and he is Lord Asherton!"

"Really?"

"Really. There is some other title in the family that Mr. Sinclair's father used to have, but they will drop that now. Mamma is delighted he is Lord Asherton. She always wanted him to marry one of my sisters, and now his wife will be a duchess some day."

"His wife will be a duchess some day!" The words seemed burnt into Dolly's brain. And she was to be his wife—she who had sung for money in public streets! Would he love her less now he was so rich and great? Ah, no; she had his own letter. Whatever happened she could not, would not, doubt him. He was her lover faithful and true, despite the new dignity devolving on him. He was coming back to her, and yet that awful presentiment would not leave her. A mocking voice seemed crying in her ears that not for her was this happiness—not for her was the title of Lady Asherton.

Lord Devereux took occasion to join her that morning, and his first words were,—

"So Sinclair's to be a duke! I suppose you never expect to see him again, Miss Smith!"

Dolly's eyes flashed.

"The world is so small one meets most people twice," she observed, calmly.

"I asked you a question the other night!"

"I know you did," blushing. "You have asked me a great many questions, Lord Devereux."

"But this particular one needs an answer. Which am I to be to you, friend or foe!"

"Neither."

"Your pardon, I must be one."

"I don't see it."

"Listen," and for once all affectation died out of his voice, and it was earnest, passionate. "I don't know what spell there is about you. I have seen handsome women, I have met the most accomplished beauties of the day, but not one of them touched my heart as you do. From the moment I saw your face I have never been able to forget it; waking and sleeping your image haunts me. I never believed in love, save as a pastime; but since I have ceased to scoff at the passion, for I know that love exists, and I love you."

"I wish you did not."

It was the first time she had ever seemed to acknowledge the reality of his affection. He looked at her with a strange, passionate longing in his face.

"I am not a good man. Some people say I

"WILL WONDERS EVER CEASE?" SAID DEVEREUX—"IT'S MY PROUD SONGSTRESS OF KENSINGTON!"

have the makings of a bad one; but, Dolly, I love you."

"I wish you did not."

"You said that before."

"What else can I say?"

"You can bid me hope."

"I cannot."

"Do you mean that nothing will ever persuade you to listen to me?"

"I mean just that."

"You don't understand," said Lord Devereux, thinking she could not have taken in the rashness of the sacrifice he meditated. "You have such a hold on me that I could forget ambition, family pride, and interest for your sake. I am not asking you to be the idle plaything of an hour, but my wife, the future Countess of Devereux."

He imagined he had made a very generous offer, and he never doubted what her answer would be.

"I can only answer as I said before, Lord Devereux. I cannot listen to you."

"You are afraid of my parents?"

"I am afraid of nothing."

"You think they would be hard upon you, but you might trust me to protect you against every unkind word."

Dolly shook her head.

"I wish you would understand me, Lord Devereux. My reason is a very simple one, and given in five words—I do not love you!"

"But in three——"

"No time would alter my feelings. Do you know you are indirectly the cause of my mother's death, that in her anxiety to remove me from your persecution she exposed herself to the illness that killed her?"

"I am very sorry."

"I am not reproaching you; I only want you to see how impossible it is that you and I could ever be aught to each other."

"I expect you would never have found out the impossibility if you had not met Mr. Sinclair—Lord Asherton, I should say. You aim high then, Miss Smith. A future earl is not deserving of your notice; you can smile at nothing under an embryo duke."

"I can smile on no man I do not trust."

"And you trust *him*?"

"I trusted him from the moment I saw him. He has never given me cause to do otherwise."

Devereux whistled.

"You'll regret it to your dying day."

"I think not."

"I tell you you will. Herbert won't marry you; he cannot."

"I never said he thought of love or marriage. You asked me if I trusted him; I told you yes."

"And you refuse me?"

"Decidedly."

"Well, you'll live to regret it. I was a fool to think of making a peeress of a street singer. You'll remember, one day, when your pride has had a fall, all you have thrown away; but it'll be too late to repent then, when you're singing in the streets again. It won't be a pleasant thought that you refused to be a countess. I suppose I ought to thank you for saving me from my folly, but when a woman has got a face like yours, somehow a man doesn't seem to care much what folly he commits for it."

He left her as suddenly as he had come, and poor Dolly sank into a chair, white and trembling.

The interview had been a very trying one to her in many ways. She rejected John Devereux's insinuations against her lover with the scorn they deserved; and yet how wonderfully they accorded with the presentiment of evil which oppressed her.

"Oh! my darling," thought the poor girl, in her anguish, "if only I could see you, if I could tell what you are doing now, I think it would be easier to bear. Are you happy? Does this awful presentiment of sorrow trouble you too?"

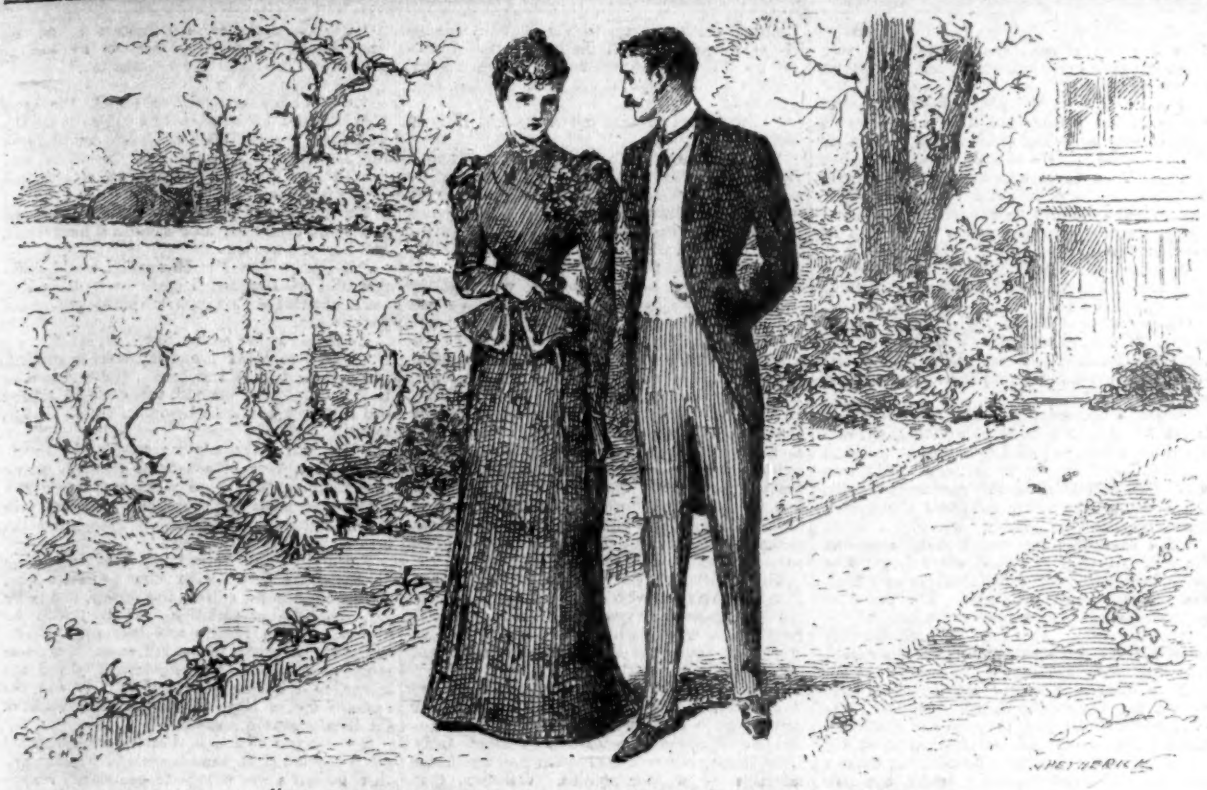
No, it did not trouble him; the new Lord Asherton was perfectly happy. The shadow that had weighed on his brow was lifted; he looked years younger. He could think of his darling now without a heartache; without a pang of remorse. Her sweet, girlish love would owe no sorrow to him now; never now need he dread her hearing the secret of his life; and the magician that had worked the change was not his new title; his honours, present and to come, his vast wealth, had nothing to do with the smile on Herbert's lips. What had worked the marvel? Only a small slip of paper which had reached him the day before. Not a letter, just a formal certificate, duly filled in and authenticated by the name of a well-known medical man.

Don't blame my hero, don't shudder at his heartlessness, when I tell you that paper was a certificate of death, that it recorded the decease of one Magdalen Sinclair, at the early age of twenty-five, of consumption.

Magdalen had been his boyhood's love. Time was when he had deemed the world well lost for her. She had wrecked his home, blighted his life, and now her death seemed to remove the last shadow from his path, since it left him free to give his name to the girl whom he loved deeply, passionately, fervently—as, alas! he had never loved Magdalen.

(*To be continued.*)

In Berlin the firemen wear water-jackets with a double skin, which they are able to fill with water from the hose. If the space between the two layers becomes over-filled, the water escapes through a valve at the top of the helmet, and flows down over the fireman like a cascade, protecting him doubly. The smoke helmets, largely used in Germany, Austria, Holland, and Italy, enable the bearer to breathe and see at his ease in a smoke-laden atmosphere. In some instances the apparatus includes a means of telephonic communication with the street below.



"I SHALL NEVER FORGET HOW GOOD YOU WERE TO ME," SAID THE GIRL, EARNESTLY.

THE BRIDE OF AN HOUR.

—:o:—

CHAPTER XIII.

AFTER a storm there comes a calm, and so after all the misery and sorrow which pursued Violet Dean (alias the Countess of Ashdale) after her troubled flight from Margrave Court, there came for the lonely girl a time of quiet, peaceful tranquility; looking back on which, afterwards, she wondered she had not known it was too good to last.

First of all, pretty Mrs. Nairn took a great fancy to the young pianist. Herself a woman of refinement and culture, a lady in the strictest sense of that much misused word, she was quick to see that Miss Dean was no ordinary "young person," but had moved in society written with a big capital letter. She could not bear to think of the girl spending all her leisure in Mrs. Burns's attic; and to David Nairn's unmitigated surprise, after Miss Dean had been at her post some weeks, his wife suddenly proposed that she should live with them.

"My dear girl," said David, frankly, "I thought when we were first married you expressed a great desire that no third person should be quartered on us."

"I didn't want your sister," returned the little lady, with charming frankness, "she would have told me whenever she was put out, 'How very absurd it was of her brother to marry a shop girl,' but Miss Dean is altogether different from Maria."

"She is ten years younger."

"Fifteen," contradicted his wife, "and she wouldn't want to interfere, or think she could keep house better than I did. Then I believe she would understand we liked to be alone sometimes, and so not foist her company upon us always. She looks so white and thin that I have got it into my head she doesn't have enough to eat, and it can't be good for her to spend her evenings and Sundays in her bedroom."

"I give in," said the proprietor of the music shop. "You shall have it your own way, Nell; only please remember Miss Dean suits me admirably as a pianist, and if she doesn't suit you as a boarder, I shall be sorry we tried the experiment. How much do you mean to charge her?"

"Charge her! I don't keep a boarding-house!"

"Do you intend to provide her with a home gratis?"

"I shall tell her you are so pleased with her music you thought of raising her salary, and that I felt sure as the spring came on she would want more air and exercise, so I thought it would be better for her to live with us. You can pay her ten shillings a week, David."

Mrs. Nairn found her proposal warmly welcomed. Violet Dean had no complaint against Mrs. Burns; but the loneliness of the life tried her, and to a girl who had been used to all the small refinements and nicetics of life there was something almost painful in having only one room for meals, recreation, and sleep.

"I was thankful to Mrs. Burns for taking me in the first night I came to London," she told Mrs. Nairn frankly, "and while I was looking out for a situation I never troubled about the attic, so that I could pay the rent; but since I have been here it gives me a dreary, forlorn feeling to know that my home is represented by four whitewashed walls, and that if I want the flaps of my table up for meals or work, it has to go right against the door, because there is no room for it anywhere else. If a tap comes I have to put my tray on the bed and shut down the flaps of the table before I can open the door."

"It must be a squeeze. I can do better for you than that. Mr. Nairn says if you and I quarrel it will make your position at the shop awkward; but I am not given to quarrelling, and I don't think you look very terrible."

So Violet Dean was installed in a pleasant, airy room in the Nairns' semi-detached house. She was made free of the little garden where they were trying to grow such plants as were hardy enough to defy the London smoke, and of the nursery, where three small people took to her at once; but with a tact David Nairn appreciated, she never went into the drawing-room unless specially sent for, and seemed to prefer spending her evenings pouring over the books which almost lined the walls of the study.

"They belonged to David's father," explained Mrs. Nairn, "neither of us are literary, but he was an author. I never saw anyone so fond of books as you, Miss Dean, unless it's Mr. Maxwell, and poor fellow he gets his living by them."

"Why do you call him poor?" asked Miss Dean, who did not like the adjective.

Nell sighed.

"I hardly know. He must be nearly thirty, and yet he never gets on. To my own knowledge he can only just pay his way—a very narrow, humble way it is, too. Leonard Maxwell, his cousin, who shares his rooms, makes far more money than Bernard without working nearly so hard."

"But money isn't everything. And if Mr. Maxwell likes his work——"

"My dear child, money means more to a man than a woman. If Bernard does not make a hit soon he will be nothing but a publishers' hack all his life. His plays are his best work; he seems to put his very soul into them, and yet no manager in London will look at them. He has to keep the pot boiling by writing short stories at a guinea or two apiece, and reading the manuscripts of other poor strugglers less fortunate than himself to see if they will do to grace the pages of a penny paper, whose proprietor pays him a pound a week for his services."

"But he is sure to get on some day," said Miss Dean, hopefully; "he looks like a man who would succeed in anything he undertook."

"Have you seen his cousin?"

"No," and Miss Dean blushed, thinking how very little she had seen really of Bernard himself; "but I don't think I should like him."

"Because I spoke slightingly of him just now! It was wrong of me. Leonard is really very pleasant; only I prefer Bernard, and feel jealous for his sake."

Bernard Maxwell had always been a frequent visitor at the Nairns, and if he came there a little oftener after Violet lived with them they did not notice it. He and David were staunch friends. Then those who had fought an uphill fight themselves once could feel as no others could for the severity of his struggle. He was always warmly welcomed, and the evenings he spent there were the happiest in his life.

Once, and only once, Violet tried to express her gratitude for his kindness to her that terrible day on Waterloo Bridge.

"Never speak of it again, Miss Dean," he said gently. "It was the darkest hour in your life, and I don't wonder you had lost heart. It was very little I could do for you, but to do that little was a pleasure."

It was a Saturday afternoon late in May. David Nairn had gone to a *matinée*; his wife was indoors with a slight cold, she herself had bidden Bernard to stay to tea, and told him he would find Miss Dean in the garden, so that he and Violet sauntering up and down the narrow domain were only obliging her desires.

"You have been my best friend," answered the girl, earnestly. "I shall never forget how good you were to me. The Nairns are very kind, but you were more than kind. You asked no questions and yet you seemed to understand."

"I understood. I've gone through the mill myself, Miss Dean, you see, and so I know what it feels to be down."

There came a strange silence on them both. She was feeling how she longed to be able to do something for him, just to prove her gratitude, and the man meanwhile was marvelling at the perfection of her beauty. Even in her darkest hour she had been singularly pretty, but now with a calm, tranquil life, an assured income, and a kindly home, her whole face had softened, the lines trouble and anxiety had written had faded out; her cheeks had a faint blush-rose bloom, her glorious eyes had lost that troubled, hunted look they had worn when Bernard first knew her.

"Have you heard anything of your mother?" he asked, then as a shadow flitted over her face, "Forgive me, but I can't help thinking her heart must be sore for want of you."

"Oh, no," said the girl, thinking of her life at Clematis Cottage. "Mother never cared for me. I was so tall people knew her real age when they saw she had such a big daughter, and then mother had so many little ways I could not imitate. She used to measure her regard for people just by their income. If she had been invited out to tea and at the last moment one of her grand friends asked her to dinner to fill a gap at the table, she used to throw over the poor little tea party and pretend that she had forgotten the date. You can't think what mother was like, she was always scheming to get something out of people. She used to say I was a little savage because I hated it."

"You must take after your father."

"I think I do. But he died when I was a child. I am an unlucky person, Mr. Maxwell, all the people I love die or go away."

"That sounds tragic. I am rather in a minor key myself to-day, and begin to think friendship a fickle thing. I have lost my cousin."

"Lost him!" Violet Dean looked bewildered. "Oh, I don't mean that I have lost him as one loses a pet dog or a small child. I'm not going to offer a reward for him in an advertisement beginning, 'Lost, stolen, or strayed,' but all the same I am a bit cut up."

"Has he quarrelled with you?"

"Not exactly. He had an offer made to him which I considered it foolish to accept. He did accept it, and—we have parted company."

"Has he left England?"

"No, nor London either, but there is not much communication between Belgravia and Bloomsbury, and I expect I shall have lost him as completely as though the sea flowed between us."

"Will you tell me about it? I can at least be sorry for you!"

"I should like to tell you. Unknown to me Leonard sent a picture to the Royal Academy. He says he did not tell me for fear I should be cut up if it was refused, but that does not explain why he kept silent after it had been accepted."

"It was cruel of him not to confide in you, but——"

"You are thinking that was not reason enough for our quarrelling, and I tell you again that we have not quarrelled. I liked the picture very much. It's quite a small affair, still life, just a basket of violets overturned, and the violets lying in a scattered mass on the ground. His name was in the catalogue, and attracted the notice of a Lady Melton, a very wealthy widow, who has just returned from India where she lost her husband. Lady Melton is Leonard's great aunt, being the youngest sister of his grandmother. She has been abroad a great number of years, and professed not to know his mother, Lady Lucy, had left a son. As Lady Melton is on the worst of terms with her nephew, Lord Ashdale, she seemed disposed to 'take up' Leonard, and asked him to her house several times, and introduced him to her friends as her great-nephew. Of course, Leonard is very fascinating, and being rich and childless she may have taken a genuine fancy to him, but, I confess, to me it looked more as if she were noticing him out of opposition to Lord Ashdale."

The girl who was called Violet Dean looked at Bernard Maxwell with a puzzled expression.

"I am quite sure you would not be jealous of your cousin, but I think it was horrid of that great lady, your aunt, to invite him so much and take no notice of you."

"I'm not jealous," said Bernard, doggedly, "and according to Lady Melton's view it was quite right to try and separate Leonard and me. She looked at in this way. Her niece, Lady Lucy Deane, had been dragged into an unsuitable marriage by a poor curate, therefore, that curate had done her a grievous wrong, and his family could not be the right sort of people to be intimate with her son. But I must not make you think badly of Leonard. I have told you his picture attracted a great deal of notice. Lady Melton's recognising him as her great nephew brought him into fashionable society which a dependent like myself could not hope to enter, and she had made him feel as it were between two worlds, our life of poverty and Bohemianism palled on him, and then when all was ripe she made an offer if he would leave 'his miserable quarters in Bloomsbury' she would pay the rent of a studio for him in Chelsea, and give him a home in her house in Cadogan Place. His genius would then be free to assert itself. He could decline, henceforth, to paint pot-boilers or 'copy' for the dealers. He would be able to devote his time and talents to some great work which would make his name immortal."

Miss Deane shook her head.

"I should think, on the contrary, he had sold himself into bondage. While he shared your quarters he 'owed no man anything', and I suppose he could always make up his share of the expenses by copying some great work on commission. Now Lady Melton will think he is bound in honour to produce some masterpiece, and yet as she will naturally make some demands on his time he will have less leisure than before. Then if he is to appear as her nephew his personal expenses will be largely increased."

"She may make him an allowance," said Bernard. "He did not say so when he told me of her offer. He told me it would be such a great thing to be free from sordid care, and that he was bound to succeed now he had such a chance. I was a fool. I acted the part of wet blanket, and told him that success did not come in a few months, and that by agreeing to Lady Melton's proposal he was selling himself into bondage. I pointed out to him that she can't leave him a fortune, or even a legacy. At her death her jointure returns to her husband's family, and though wealthy, she spends so freely as certainly to live up to her income, even if she left all her savings to Leonard they would amount to very little."

"And he accepted her offer!"

"Yes, he took my remonstrance badly. He even hinted I was jealous because no wealthy great aunt had turned up to assist me."

"How cruel of him!"

"We didn't quarrel, but—well, the sneer rankles, and I don't feel as if I could go to see him at his new studio; besides, I might get him into disgrace with his patroness. She would not care for her *protégé* to be mixed up still with a Bohemian like myself."

The girl's eyes flashed; she was staunch and true in all things to those she called her friends, and Bernard was one.

"If I were you, Mr. Maxwell, I would never rest till I was famous. I would make Lady Melton acknowledge that you were the genius, not your cousin."

He smiled at her enthusiasm.

"I used to think I had it in me to succeed, but latterly I have lost heart; the way to fame is full of thorns, the hill too steep to climb; and somehow Leonard's desertion seems the last straw."

"You will make a name yet," said his companion in a tone of conviction; "don't worry with the plays that have come back again and again, you must have got out of heart with them. Write something entirely fresh, and make up your mind it will succeed."

When Mr. Nairn came home from the *matinée* he brought a friend with him, an actor who, having come in for a handsome legacy, and being young and full of ambition, was fired with the idea of taking a theatre and becoming his own manager. A recent illness had caused him to be temporarily out of an engagement; he did not intend to take one yet awhile; this was the extreme end of May, only about three weeks of the London season remained.

His idea was to find a theatre which he could get possession of in time to open in October, and then go for a sea voyage to completely restore his health, coming back in ample time for such matters as rehearsals and lesser details, though the theatre, opening piece, and company must be definitely selected before he started.

Nairn said lightly, as they sat at supper:

"You'd better encourage rising talent, St. John; here's my friend Maxwell brimming over with good ideas; he'd write you a far better play than a man who has so many commissions on hand he hardly knows which to do first."

Vivian St. John looked up quickly; a pleasant, keen-looking man with a quick eye which few things escaped, he had taken rather a fancy to Bernard, whom he had met at the Nairns' two or three times before. There was no trace of patronage in his manner as he asked:

"Do you really go in for that sort of thing, Maxwell? I thought you were a story writer, pure and simple."

Bernard shook his head.

"I only took to stories because managers wouldn't take to me. I had one comedietta published, which was a dead failure because it came out at a minor theatre, and was entrusted to two 'comic' performers, its line being sentiment. I suppose I have written half-a-dozen other plays, but—they hang fire."

"Well, write a seventh and let me see it," said St. John; "but I can only give you a month, I want to be off on my voyage, and I must get this matter settled first."

"Then you would give me a speedy answer!"

"In three days after receipt of MS. I'll say 'Yes' or 'No.' Oh! you need not be grateful, I like quick business, and, don't you see, when I've got my place there's heaps of other things to do before I can start for my trip. I've done one thing to-day—signed a lease of the Frivolity. I shall have possession on the first of September, and mean to open in October."

Bernard Maxwell went home to the rooms, which had seemed so lonely since Leonard's departure full of hope and ambition, but, alas! in two or three days he had begun to despair. Try as he would, no good leading idea for the new drama would come to him. He whose brain had been full of dramatic plots when there was no chance of a market for them seemed to have no imagination left now that he had the possibility—nay, the probability—of selling his work. He

drifted to the Nairns' house the following Saturday, intending to ask for St. John's address (he had gone to Paris for a fortnight) and write that he gave up the attempt.

Both the music-seller and his wife were out, and Violet Dean could not give the required information, but to Bernard there was something soothing just in her very presence, and he found himself telling her of his difficulties and pouring out the story of his failure.

"There is not one single idea in my head," he said frankly; "if only I could get the leading thread the details would come of themselves. I have tried in vain to think of startling catastrophies and appalling dangers. Everything that comes to my mind has been done before."

"I believe you are too anxious," said Miss Deane, "you know so much depends upon this being a success that you are over critical of your own thoughts."

"I feel as if I would give years of my life for one brilliant idea. Miss Deane, what was the most striking thing you ever heard of?"

She shook her head.

"I don't think I have heard many romantic stories. I was not allowed to read novels when I was at school."

"And you can't help me! Did you never hear of anything very thrilling happening to your friends? It's a shame to throw my worries on you, but you are just my last hope."

And he had saved her life. The girl who might write herself Countess of Ashdale could never forget all she owed to Bernard Maxwell. She was the last creature in the world to make capital out of her own sorrows, but for his sake she made a sacrifice. For a moment she was willing to lift the veil she had flung over her past.

"I heard a story once, it was true, but you could alter it; it struck me as the saddest thing I had ever heard. There was a Scotch girl who knew nothing of English law. She was married, as she thought, to a man she loved with every fibre of her heart. He was in difficulties with his creditors, and could not let the world know he had married a poor girl. I think they were happy for some time; then she discovered that because he had married her in a name she knew was not his own the ceremony was invalid, and she was not his wife. They did not meet for years, and then they came face to face suddenly. It was his wedding-day, and his wife was on his arm."

"Miss Dean, you have saved me. I shall alter your friend's—the Scotch girl was your friend I am sure—story till she could never recognise it, but you have given me the leading idea I wanted."

"I am glad of that," her voice had a strange, far-off sound, "but that poor lady was not my friend, Mr. Maxwell. I happen to know her story, that is all."

CHAPTER XIV.

The initial difficulty removed, Bernard Maxwell got on swimmingly. The work grew under his hand, and (hardest test of all) he himself was satisfied with it.

But though Miss Dean had helped him with the germ of his plot, he had so altered and rearranged the sad little story she told him that even the heroine of it would not have recognised her own romance.

In the drama "Broken Fetters," the heroine, Gertrude Lestrange, to save her only brother from prosecution for forgery, went to implore the pardon and clemency of his employer, a wealthy merchant, whose name he had signed.

Mr. Harris, a hard-featured man of forty, had eyes to perceive the girl's amazing beauty, and after temporising for some time, offered her her choice to marry him and obtain her brother's pardon, or let the law take its course.

The case was further complicated by Gertrude having a lover of her own, Rupert Clifford, a poor but high-born officer. In her dire necessity Gertrude, believing Clifford (whose letters had been suppressed by her brother's false agent) to the sacrifice, Guy Lestrange was allowed to go to Australia and would receive five hundred pounds from the merchant's purse.

The ne'er-do-well had started, the forged cheque was in ashes, and the day was fixed for Gertrude's wedding, when Rupert Clifford appeared, cleared himself of all suspicion of inconstancy, and demanded that Gertrude should keep her promise.

Love, inclination, every instinct of her woman's heart pleaded for Rupert. On the other hand, Mr. Harris had fulfilled his part of their contract and looked to her to keep hers, or, as she put it bitterly, she had sold herself, and the purchase-money was already paid.

In spite of her lover's entreaties, Gertrude decided to marry the merchant. The wedding day came, the actual ceremony in church was not represented, but the third act revealed Gertrude in bridal robes just returned from church, and her aunt, Mrs. Rutherford (a rich lady who had only deigned to recognise her niece after her engagement to the rich merchant) holding a crowded at-home after the wedding.

Suddenly "Mrs. Harris" was announced, and a tall, graceful woman, dressed in deep mourning, appeared. She informed the company generally—and the bride more particularly—that she had been married nearly twelve years, but that, as Mr. Harris became richer he grew tired of his humble wife; there were constant disputes, and after a worse one than usual she, walked out of his house, determined to go back to dressmaking—the trade she had pursued before her marriage. She knew that her husband left New York a few months later, but she never troubled herself. She got on wonderfully, and her dresses became the rage with the ladies of Fifth Avenue. She became first partner, and then sole proprietress of a very grand shop near the Broadway, and it was only when she read in the English society papers of the engagement of Jabez Harris to Miss Gertrude Lestrange that it occurred to her her husband might be passing himself off as a bachelor. She wanted nothing from him, but she objected to her children's father committing bigamy, so she left the dressmaking establishment in charge of her forewoman and crossed the ocean to see to things.

Naturally Gertrude's marriage was illegal, and her fetters broken. Naturally Rupert forgave her, and having (with the luck which comes oftener on the stage than in real life) just succeeded to an uncle's fortune, he repaid the money Harris had lost through Guy Lestrange, and the curtain fell, leaving Gertrude in her lover's arms, and the audience, with the conviction that as soon as ever a licence could be procured she would be married again—this time to the man of her choice.

Written in clear, crisp English, and with plenty of "go," "Broken Fetters" literally sparkled with good things. Bernard took the play to the Nairns, and read it aloud to the pair and Violet. All three thought it delightful, and predicted that Mr. St. John would be more than satisfied. Bernard left the precious MS. with Miss Dean when he went away.

"I want you to make quite sure I have not used the story you told me in such a way that it could pain the heroine if she happened to come across the play."

Miss Dean took "Broken Fetters" up to her own room and read it again. She did something more: she copied the play, she could not quite have told why; perhaps she distrusted Mr. St. John and thought he might imlay Bernard's masterpiece. Perhaps she felt she had had a share in the writing of the drama and wanted to keep a memorial of it.

She used to read "Broken Fetters" over and over again, it was her own story, and yet, with a fatal difference; Gertrude Lestrange had sold herself in return for her brother's pardon. Veronica Leigh had bartered away her freedom for far less, that she might have a home that was not grudged her and escape from her mother's tyranny.

But Gertrude had had a lover. The bride of an hour knew in her heart that was the real difference between them. Had there been one human creature to care what became of her she would never have made such a terrible muddle of her life.

Then, too, the wife who claimed Jabez Harris was a legal wife, whose appearance broke Gertrude's fetters. The sad, broken-hearted woman who came to Veronica was no wife in the eyes of the law, her existence could not make Veronica any less Lady Ashdale, though it made her shrink in horror from the man she had married. There was quite an agony of suspense in Miss Dean's heart when she waited to hear Mr. St. John's verdict; she seemed to feel as if she had a personal interest in the play, and that the success of "Broken Fetters" were very near her heart.

The Nairns discussed the matter constantly. The little pianist never spoke of it unless obliged. The kindly husband and wife openly predicted that Mr. St. John would take the play, and it would be the hit of the autumn; but Violet Dean only felt that if he refused it it would mean the blackest of despair for her friend.

She could hardly attend to her duties at the shop when the third day came after the MS. had been submitted to Mr. St. John. She so longed to know if Bernard's suspense was over. If he knew in time she was sure he would come up that evening and tell her.

She played pieces over for exacting customers as a creature in a dream; and then, just when the shop was most crowded, a telegraph-boy brought her one of those ominous yellow-coloured envelopes which are sometimes so fraught with importance and at others convey the most trivial news. She had to wait nearly half-an-hour before she had a moment to take out the message and read it, but she had felt all along it came from Bernard.

It did, and consisted of but one word,—

"Accepted."

After that details were decided quickly enough. Bernard came round to his friends pretty often in the summer evenings, and was always ready to confide in them.

Mr. Nairn pronounced the terms of the agreement decided on by Mr. St. John, "fair, but not liberal."

"If the play's a big success, Maxwell, you'll make a fortune out of it; but, if it's a failure, or only a moderate success, it seems to me your interests go to the wall. However, you've got what you craved—the chance of a hearing."

Mr. St. John engaged the principals of his company before he left England. He would be back in August. The rehearsals would begin with September, and the first performance was fixed for Saturday, the eighth of October. All this was decided before he sailed on the voyage which was to completely restore his health.

"You have luck, Bernard, I can tell you," remarked David Nairn, "if St. John plays Rupert Clifford himself. He's one of the best stage lovers I ever saw."

July and August passed pleasantly away. In the latter month, London being practically empty, Mr. Nairn offered his pianist a holiday; and, having no friends of her own to visit, she went down to Broadstairs, where Helen and the children had been for some weeks. The change did her good, and she came back to London looking in the best of health.

Mr. St. John did not desert his friends on his return to England. Busy as he was he found time to look in on the Nairns pretty frequently, and he was always full of the Frivolity and the great success *Broken Fetters* would certainly be.

"It *ought* to succeed," said David Nairn, one night, after the actor-manager had departed; "but I wish he and Maxwell didn't make quite so sure of it. It will be a terrible blow to the pair of them if the piece falls flat."

"Mr. St. John said he should send us a box for the first night," said Nell, "and I didn't like to refuse, but I would much rather not be there. I think if the play proved a failure, I should begin to cry there and then."

"Oh, you must go," said her husband; "we are about the closest friends Maxwell has, now that precious cousin of his has deserted him."

"I hope Lady Melton and her *protégée* will be

there," said Miss Dean, "then they will see that Mr. Maxwell is a genius as well as his cousin."

"I'd rather they stayed away till the success of *Broken Fetters* was a certainty," said Mr. Nairn. "Leonard is desperately jealous of his cousin, always was; and he's quite capable of trying to damn the piece with faint praise. I'd rather he didn't visit the Frivolity till we knew the fate of Bernard's play."

Although only a music seller, David Nairn was a man of birth and education. His friends had not deserted him when the caprice of fate obliged him to become a shopkeeper, and he still knew many people moving in the great world. He had never liked Leonard Maxwell as much as he liked his cousin, but he would not have spoken so harshly of him without cause.

Leonard had now been domiciled with Lady Melton over four months, and the drawbacks to the arrangement Bernard had foreseen, had actually become apparent. Lady Melton had been used to ease and luxury all her life, she could not comprehend anyone having to work systematically at regular times. She certainly wished Leonard to paint a masterpiece and make himself famous, yet she encroached on his time upon the slightest excuse. What was the use of possessing a good-looking nephew if he did not take on himself the social duties which generally devolve on "the gentleman of the house?" So Leonard found himself attending his aunt to all sorts of fashionable gatherings at all hours.

Painting, like literature, is an exacting mistress. Good work at either can't be sandwiched in, for an hour or so, between two engrossing social engagements. Leonard found that if he went to bed in the small hours of the morning and rode for an hour or two after breakfast, there was not much time for art before he was expected to lunch with his aunt and retail the latest news for her benefit.

Lady Melton provided him lavishly with everything. She kept a horse for his use, and the servants deferred to him as if he had been the son of the house. She did not, however, offer him an allowance. Perhaps she thought that as she supplied him with everything he could possibly require, he had no need for money, or it may have been she reasoned, seeing he had had to keep himself entirely up to the previous May he could certainly earn enough for his pocket money. Anyway, she made no offer of monetary help, and Leonard hated the idea of asking her for it. But he was in a most uncomfortable fix, since as a man moving in the best society, asked everywhere, and a general favourite, his private expenses must be considerable. Leonard had purchased a new dress suit and various other toilet requisites, with the money received for his last commission. He had thought very little of the dealer's twenty pounds at the time, he had been so full of his future triumphs, but, strange to relate, he had earned not a shilling since, and he had descended to a weakness unknown in his days of poverty—he was in debt.

Cab hire, tips, postage stamps, and the hundred-and-one trifles necessary to keep up his position, ran away with plenty of money. Leonard soon found himself shorter of that valuable commodity than he had ever been before, while he had not finished the smallest picture since his migration to Cadogan Place, not even accomplished one of the tiny landscapes that he always called "pot-boilers," and for which a dealer paid him five to ten pounds.

He felt his way cautiously. The next time Lady Melton spoke of some engagement which would cost money, "he doubted if he could afford it." The hint struck home; the kind old lady said at once she did not like him to be cramped for money, she would make him a regular allowance; then with the proceeds of his brush all would be well.

She wrote a cheque for the first quarter on the spot. Leonard thanked her, and much as he longed to see the amount, would not glance at the cheque till he had left the room.

Ten pounds! His face fell. He knew that he owed over a hundred, it might be nearer two, and people were beginning to press him for payment.

There was nothing more to expect from his aunt till Christmas. He could not get on with ten pounds for three weeks, much less three months. There was nothing for it but to raise money by a promissory note or "bill." Of course, the interest would be heavy, but then he would be earning plenty soon. It had better be a bill at three months for a hundred, the discounter would probably give him seventy, and of course the thing would want a friend's name. There was no one in his new set he could ask, but he felt sure Bernard would not refuse him his signature. He had not seen much of the old chap lately, but no doubt it would be all right.

Leonard went to Bloomsbury, and felt distinctly aggrieved that his cousin was out, half an hour's waiting did not improve his temper, and Bernard coming home in good spirits from a rehearsal found his visitor in a most unamiable frame of mind.

"Where on earth have you been, you used always to be indoors at this time?"

"I've changed my habits. I have been to a rehearsal of my play at the Frivolity."

Leonard stared at him.

"You don't mean the play St. John's going to open with is yours, it's advertised as by Maxwell, but I never thought of you."

"It's myself and no oblige," said Bernard, good humouredly, "and if *Broken Fetters* proves a success they say my fortune's made."

Leonard felt furious with envy, but he only said, smiling.

"Then since you're in such good case you cannot refuse a small favour," and he went on to explain what he wanted.

And Bernard did refuse. It cost him a good deal for he was fond of his cousin, and though he never thought Leonard would try to injure him in consequence of his refusal, he felt it might cost him his friendship.

"If I had the money I'd lend it you gladly, old fellow, but I passed my word to my father I'd never sign a thing of that sort, 'lending his name' to friends half ruined him, and he wanted to save me."

Leonard shrugged his shoulders.

"It's polite of you to imply I should allow the burden to rest on you, and of course, a promise to your father is an excuse I cannot try to conquer—such promises are convenient."

Bernard looked bewildered.

"If the play's a success, Leonard, I could lend you the sum myself in three months."

"That would be of no use. Besides," and he sneered, "the play *might* prove a failure."

Leonard went back to Cadogan Place with one desire in his heart stronger than his wish for money, a desire that *Broken Fetters* should fall utterly.

He had been his cousin's greatest friend. He had once believed their interests identical, but now he knew that he had failed, that he had made a false move in going to Cadogan Place, and one it was well-nigh impossible to retrace. He had been sliding down hill in life's race, and Bernard ascending. If *Broken Fetters* proved successful his cousin would be famous. Leonard decided the play should fail. He had a good many theatrical acquaintances, and though he could not decide on the spur of the moment how to do it, he meant to spoil sport. As he reached Cadogan Place it came on him almost as an inspiration, that he had once been introduced to the lady who was to play the part of Bernard's heroine. Clearly his first act must be to call on her.

(To be continued.)

FORECAST OF THE WAR.—Apparently the gentleman who wrote the Maypole Soap advertisement which appeared in a recent issue of the "Daily Telegraph" was something of a prophet, for the headlines read, 'A Great Victory!" (since confirmed) and "A Revolution in Progress!" of which there are ominous rumours in Spain. The moral apparently is—Read the Maypole Soap advertisements.

MAGGIE'S SACRIFICE.

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(Continued from page 152.)

The wretched hours of that hurried night journey lived in Maggie's memory to the last day of her life. The cold, grey light of early dawn was breaking over the hills and woods when she arrived at the Rectory, and was received with open arms by her mother, and fawned upon joyously by Max.

"My mother and my dog love me, at any rate," she thought, bitterly, adding aloud, "How is Robbie?"

"He is better, dearest. The crisis is past, the danger over."

"I am so glad. May I see him?"

"Yes. Only you mustn't speak."

"Very well."

Silently she looked down at the little wasted face, and a great tear stole from under her lashes, and splashed down on the coverlet; then she turned away, murmuring something about being tired, and sought her room. She had a struggle to go through, a letter to write. Philip must be released, made happy at the expense of her peace and content. The dismissal must come from her. He must never guess that she had learnt his secret.

Helplessly her heart moaned within her, as she thought of how she must pull down, with her own hands, the fairy-like fabric of a happy future, sweep away the dwelling-place she thought her soul would have rested in all the days of her life.

There was no help for it, it must be done. She knew now, only too well, that she had been but a shadow, flitting across his path for awhile, and then vanishing like mist before sunshine for ever.

Steadily she wrote, releasing him from the tie that galled and fretted, and kept him from sharing his life with the woman he really loved. In a few simple words she told him she had mistaken her own feeling, that she found she did not care for him, and asking him to release her without comment or expostulation.

Philip Forrester never knew, never guessed, what it cost his "Little Simplicity" to write that letter, which came as a message from Heaven to him. He thought she would be glad to be rid of him, and dashed off a few hurried kind lines, saying that everything should be as she wished.

"As she wished!" Poor child! when her whole heart moaned helplessly for a crumb, only a crumb, of that love that could never be hers; and then that same evening he sought Blanche Ferrol's side, showed her the letter that set him free, and begged in a few straightforward, manly words that she would forgive the past, and be his wife. And she—shy, tremulous, startled out of all her proud self-possession, put both her hands in his, murmuring "Yes," crowning his life with a lasting happiness he knew, as he took her to his heart with a tender "My darling!"

The same declining sun that shone on the happy lovers at Hanchfield illumined the little room at Oakdale Rectory, where Robbie lay in his sister's arms, quietly sleeping, while she read the hurried lines that released her from her engagement, and broke her heart. She had unconsciously hoped that he would refuse to accept his dismissal. Now all was over.

With one hand she pressed the child's curly head close to her breast, as though to still its agonised throbbing, the other tightly clenched held the letter, the death-warrant of her happy love-dreams. Sitting at the window she watched the evening shadows lengthen; and as she gazed in bitter, tearless, anguish, out over the far-away hill-tops, at the red glow of the western sky, she knew that love and earthly hope were lost to her for ever.

[THE END.]

"THE HUMAN HAIR: Its Restoration and Preservation." A Practical Treatise on Baldness, Greyness, Superfluous Hair, &c. 40 pages. Post-free six stamps from Dr. HORN, Hair Specialist, Bournemouth.

THE RIVAL SISTERS.

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CHAPTER IV.

Never in the history of the Barminster races had there been such an exciting scene as this. Philip Desmond's face is as white as death, as with bated breath, he watches the two thoroughbreds. Every one rises to his feet in the hope of catching a good view of the flyers.

Which will win the race—the great Robin Adair or the gallant little Cleopatra?

The mad shouts are deafening.

Suddenly they notice that Robin Adair, who has been victor in a dozen such races, begins to show signs of distress. The foam covers his dark chest, and his eyes flash uneasily. It is all that his rider can do to urge him on with whip and spur.

There is only one more furlong to cover. Robin Adair and Cleopatra are side by side, neck to neck, both increasing their speed with every stride.

Suddenly Robin, the great Robin Adair, falters ever so slightly. The seething mass of men and women hold their breath. Then, quick as a flash, as if shot from a bow, gallant Cleopatra passes him. A great cry breaks from the vast multitude of spectators. One instant later, and the cry has deepened into a mighty yell. Cleopatra, with every muscle strained, passes under the wire—a winner!

The next instant she is hidden from sight by the eager thousands who are crowding and pushing one another to catch a glimpse of the winner. Philip Desmond stands for a moment as if dumbfounded. He is hardly able to credit the evidence of his own senses.

"Cleopatra has won!" cried the golden-haired girl by his side, and he answers a hoarse—"Yes!"

The girl laughs, and the sound of that laugh lingers in his memory all the long years of his afterlife.

"And I have won!" she adds, shrilly.

Again he answers, in that same hoarse monotone—"Yes!"

Before he has time even to think Trixy Pomeroy turns round to her father and mother, crying triumphantly,—

"Mamma—papa, Mr. Desmond wants me to marry him. My hand is pledged to him; that is, if you are willing!"

The young man's face turned as white as it would ever be in death.

The effect of her words can better be imagined than described. Mr. Pomeroy stared at his daughter as though he had not heard aright.

Mrs. Pomeroy was dumbfounded. And Claire—poor Claire—to her it seemed as if life had ended for her.

Mr. Pomeroy recovered himself in an instant. He had been quite sure that Mr. Desmond preferred his elder daughter Claire to his younger daughter, merry, rollicking Trixy.

"I am sure I am very well pleased," he said, heartily, extending his hand to Mr. Desmond. 'Certainly I give my consent, in which my wife joins me."

Philip Desmond's face flushed. He could not make a scene by refusing to accept the situation. He took the proffered hand. Mrs. Pomeroy rose to the occasion.

"If he prefers Trixy, that is the end of it as far as Claire is concerned. Trixy had better have him than for the family to lose him and his thousands," she thought philosophically.

Philip Desmond's friends congratulated the supposedly happy lovers. Claire spoke no word; it seemed to her as though the whole world had suddenly changed; her golden day-dreams had suddenly and without warning been dispelled.

She never remembered how the next hour passed. At last they were about to start home, and while she was wondering if she should take the same seat on returning as she had occupied in coming, her mother suddenly touched her on the arm;

"Claire," she whispered, shrilly in her ear, "under existing circumstances you must give up your seat on the tally-ho to Trixy."

The girl's eyes flashed with a dull gleam; but she made no comment. As she took her seat beside her mother, she aroused herself, though with an effort.

Pride had come to her rescue. Trixy should not exult over her. She should never know to what extent the blow had hurt her; she would keep that from her at any cost. And she kept her resolve.

Looking back at her sister occasionally, Trixy came to the conclusion, as she watched the smiles that came and went on her face and listened to her gay laughter, that Claire did not take to heart her cutting her out with her handsome beau.

During that homeward ride Philip Desmond was unusually quiet. His brain seemed in a whirl—the strange event of the afternoon seemed like a troubled dream whose spell he could not shake off, do what he would.

He looked keenly at the girl by his side. Surely she did not realise the extent of the mischief she had done by announcing their betrothal.

It was not until he had seen his party home and found himself alone at last in his boarding-house that he gave full rein to his agitated thoughts.

It was the first time in the life of this debonair young millionaire that he had come face to face with a disagreeable problem.

Ever since he had returned from college he had formed an idea of what the young lady should be whom he would marry. He had his ideal, like most men.

On one occasion, when he was abroad, and was visiting one of the grand art galleries, he had come across a picture which just suited his fancy; but the artist was loth to part with it, as it was one of the most admired gems in his studio.

"It represents one of your own countrywomen," explained the artist. "On one of my trips to England I saw a face in a crowd that held me for a moment spell-bound. The next moment it had vanished. I painted the portrait from memory, and named it 'Alone in the World.' Many tempting offers have been made me, and so far I have refused them all."

Philip Desmond had taken a fancy to the portrait. Have it he must. So he paid an enormous price for the little gem, and brought it home with him. Ever since it had hung on the wall of his magnificently-appointed room. He had never regretted his purchase, for he admired it more and more as time rolled on.

The picture represented a beautiful young girl leaning, with clasped hands, against a wall. The expression of the face was so sad, so unutterably pathetic, that one invariably paused to look a second time at it; and as you looked you could almost fancy you saw tears shining in the dark, fathomless eyes.

Philip Desmond had learned to love the pictured face, and always said to himself that if he ever came across such a girl in life, she would be his ideal, and he would make her his bride.

And now fate—a fate so strange he could hardly realise it—had changed all that for him, and he found himself, to all intents and purposes, betrothed to just the kind of a girl he did not like.

Gay Trixy Pomeroy, with her flashing get-up—a combination of strangely unnatural canary-yellow hair, pink cheeks and lips, and floating, rainbow-hued ribbons—jarred upon his artistic tastes.

He did not admire a girl who went into convulsions of laughter, as Trixy did at everything that was said and done. In fact, he liked her less each time he saw her. But she was young—only eighteen—and she might, in time, have a little more sense, he reflected.

What should he do? He looked at the matter in every light; but, whichever way he turned, he found no comfort, no way out of the dilemma.

If he were to explain to the world that the engagement was only the outcome of a thoughtless wager, his friends would surely censure him for trying to back out; they would accuse him of acting the part of a coward. He could not endure the thought of their taking that view of it. All his friends knew his ideas concerning honour, particularly where a lady was concerned.

And now he was in honour bound to fulfil his part of the wager—marry Trixy Pomeroy, whom he was beginning to hate with a hatred that startled even himself.

Such a marriage would spoil his future, shipwreck his whole life, blast his every hope. But he himself was to blame. When the hoidenish, harebrained girl had made such a daring wager, he should have declined to accept it; then this harvest of woe would not have to be reaped.

He clinched his strong white hands, cursed himself for his folly, and groaned aloud.

He could see no way out of the entanglement. He realised the truth of the words: "Of what little use is it to lay out plans for the future, as they are seldom or never carried out. We cannot go contrary to the path that Fate, with her inexorable will, has marked out for our feet to travel."

Suddenly a thought, an inspiration, came to him. He would go to Trixy, point out to her the terrible mistake of this hasty betrothal, and she might release him from it.

CHAPTER V.

The thought was like an inspiration to Philip Desmond. He would go to Trixy and ask her to break this hateful engagement; and surely she would be too proud to hold him to a betrothal from which he so ardently desired to be set free.

The following day he put his plan into execution. It was early in the afternoon when he entered the hotel, and going at once to the reception-room, he sent up his card. He had not long to wait for Miss Trixy. He had scarcely taken two or three turns across the floor ere she floated into the room with both hands outstretched, an eager smile on her red lips.

He took one of the outstretched hands, bowed over it coldly, and hastily dropped it.

"I was expecting you this afternoon," said Trixy, archly pretending not to notice his constraint, "and here you are at last."

"Miss Pomeroy," he began, stiffly, "would you mind getting your hat and taking a little stroll with me? I have something to talk over with you, and I do not wish all those people on the verandah, who are listening to us even now, to hear."

"I shall be delighted," answered Trixy. "Come on. My hat is out there, on a chair, on the verandah."

He followed her in silence. It was not until they were some little distance from the hotel that he found voice to speak.

"You say you want to talk to your betrothed," laughed the girl, with a toss of her yellow curls; "but you have maintained an unbroken silence for a long time."

"Your betrothed!"

How hateful the words sounded to him! He drew back haughtily, his brows darkening.

"I have been wondering how to begin speaking of the subject which weighs so heavily on my mind, and I think the best way is to break right into it."

"Yes," assented Trixy; "so do I."

"It is about our betrothal," he began, brusquely. "I want to ask you a plain, frank question, Miss Pomeroy, and I hope you will be equally frank with me; and that is, do you consider what you are pleased to call your betrothal to me, and which I considered at the time only a girlish prank, actually binding?"

He stopped short in the wooded path they were treading, and looked her gravely in the face—a look that forced an answer. She was equal to the occasion.

"Of course I do, Mr. Desmond," she cried, with a jolly little laugh that sounded horrible in his ears.

"And wasn't it romantic? Just like one of those stories one reads in those splendid French novels. I laughed——"

"Pray be serious, Miss Pomeroy," cut in

Philip, biting his lip fiercely, to keep back an angry retort. "This is not a subject for merriment, I assure you, and I had hoped to have a sensible conversation with you concerning it—to show each of us a way out of it, if that is possible."

Again he paused and looked at her, hoping her giddy brain would take in the meaning of his words. But in this hope he was doomed to disappointment.

"Wasn't it the funniest joke that ever happened!" Trixy rattled on. "Neither you nor I ever dreamed that Cleopatra would win the race; did we!"

"I was confident she would not," groaned Philip. "And this brings me to the subject uppermost in my mind. If I had thought there was the least likelihood of that horse winning, I would rather have cut my right hand off than make such a wager with you."

She laughed a little uneasily, saying, with an attempt at gaiety,—

"There's no use discussing that point now."

"There is no use!" he cried, huskily. "Surely you do not mean that. I have brought you here to tell you this, Miss Pomeroy; I have decided, after calm deliberation, that it would be mean and contemptible of me to hold you to a promise made so thoughtlessly. Will you not permit me to give you back that promise, my dear young lady, and set you free? I should be willing to make amends for losing the wager in any other way you may deem fit," he added, hoarsely.

The laugh which Trixy Pomeroy had practised so long died away on her lips, an expression of triumph lighted up her every feature, and a gleam of cunning, unpleasant to behold, flashed into her cold blue eyes.

"I do not wish to be set free, as you phrase it, Mr. Desmond," she answered, defiantly. "I am perfectly well pleased to have matters just as they are, I assure you."

His face paled; the one hope which had buoyed him up died suddenly in his heart.

"Please sit down there on that fallen log, Miss Pomeroy, and let us talk the matter over," he said, with desperate calmness, and looking at her steadily.

He had thought, until now, that this wager was only prompted by a thoughtless young girl's love of fun. Now it began to dawn upon him that she was not so thoughtless or innocent as she had pretended to be, and that she had successfully carried out a most clever plan, a trick, to win him, because, from a monetary point of view, he was considered a good catch.

And with that thought the little respect he had entertained for her faded quickly away. He felt that he was fencing with a keen sharper—a woman of the world who was his match, even though she were only eighteen years of age. Her next words confirmed his opinion.

"Although you do not put it in so many words, you are asking me to give you up, Philip Desmond," she said, huskily; "and I answer that I will not do so. Every one in the village knows of our betrothal, and every one in the city has heard of it by this time. I do not propose to be held up to ridicule by my friends and acquaintances regarding this matter. So that is the end of it."

"You speak without giving the matter due thought," he said, slowly. "Has it not occurred to you that love should be the motive of every engagement, and in this case love has not entered into it. We are merely acquaintances—not even friends—as the world interprets the word. It seems almost incredible that you would be willing to marry me when I tell you frankly that my heart is not in the matter, that I—pray pardon my plain language—that I do not love you!"

Trixy's face flushed hotly; her eyes fell.

"I will try to win your liking," she replied.

"It is a man's place to win," he said, proudly; "women should be won," he added, with much emphasis. "When two people marry without love, they must run all the risk such a union usually incurs."

"I have heard people say that those who marry without love are often the happiest in life," said Trixy.

"All I can say is, Heaven help people who marry under such a delusion as that," he replied. "It will not take them long to discover that they have made an awful mistake. Now, Miss Pomeroy, I ask you to think this matter over quietly and calmly. Take a week—a month."

She held up her little hand with an imperious gesture.

"At the end of that time my answer would be the same," she responded.

He drew back and looked at her steadily, his face darkening.

"I have never been discourteous to a lady," he said, huskily, "but I must tell you the truth. I am surprised, yes, almost indignant at your persistency. I had relied upon your releasing me from this hasty betrothal when you knew my sentiments."

He felt his anger getting the better of him; but he controlled it by an almost superhuman effort.

"I think that I understand you, Miss Pomeroy," he said. "I am not so vain as to imagine that you are acting from any strong feeling of liking for my unworthy self. Why should you care for me? I have never sought your good opinion."

"Have you ever heard of such a thing as love at first sight, Philip Desmond? Can you blame a girl for falling in love when she meets her ideal? Is there not a great deal of truth in the words:

"'Like Dian's kiss, unasked, unsought,
Love gives itself in word and thought,
In silence and alone to seek the elected one;
Nor voice nor sound betrays its deep impassioned gaze.'"

He looked at her in wonder.

"As I understand it, young ladies do not usually fall in love without some sort of encouragement. I have given you no encouragement whatever; so there can be but one thing which has influenced you in my favour, and that is—my money. I will ask you one question: would you be as willing to take me if I were a thirty-shillings-a-week clerk?"

"Yes," she answered, unhesitatingly. "You may as well know the truth, Philip Desmond—I love you, and I will not give you up to any woman living! The day will come when you will love me. I can wait for it—wait patiently."

"I promise you now that will never be. Pardon me, but I may as well speak the truth: you are the last girl on earth whom I could love. It grieves me to wound you, but it is only just that you should know the truth. Now will you insist upon carrying out the contract?"

"As I told you from the start, my answer will always be the same."

"We will walk back to the hotel," he said, stiffly.

She rose from the mossy log and accompanied him without another word. At last he broke the silence.

"I am a gentleman," he said, "and am in honour bound to carry out this contract, if you can not be induced to release me."

"That is the only sensible view for you to take," she said.

He crushed back the angry words that rose to his lips. He had never disliked a woman before, but he could not help but own to himself that he hated the girl by his side—the girl whom fate had destined that he should marry.

CHAPTER VI.

As Philip Desmond and Trixy walked to the hotel, the young man had made up his mind that the wedding should be put off as much as possible.

Suddenly Trixy touched him on the arm just as they reached the flight of steps leading to the verandah.

"I have one request to make of you," she said. "Please do not tell any of my folks that you do not care for me, and that it is not a bona-fide love-match."

He bowed coldly.

"As a general thing, everyone takes to me," she went on. "Mamma has a relative—an old maiden cousin, ever so old—who liked my picture so well that she declared she would make me her heiress. She's worth almost as much as you are. They named me after her—Beatrix Harris Pomeroy. That's how I happen to have such a stupid name. But I'll change it quick enough after the old lady dies and leaves me her money.

"I'll show you her picture some time, but you mustn't laugh. Oh, such a frightful-looking creature! You will just hate her when you see her picture. I know I do. It's awfully hard to write nice letters to her when I dislike her so much. You needn't think that you're going to get a penniless wife, when I have such great expectations."

She had been so engrossed in her subject that she did not notice her companion give a violent start. He could not help thinking how mercenary she was, a girl of her age.

And another thought flashed through his brain: could it be that this Miss Beatrix Harris, of whom Trixy was speaking, was a patient of his, a lady whom he held in the utmost esteem?

He said no word on that subject, but simply replied,—

"You may trust in my honour, Miss Pomeroy, never to make any lady a subject of ridicule."

"And you will call to see me often!" asked Trixy.

"Before I promise that, I must ask what you call 'often.'"

"You should take me out riding every afternoon, and call at least every other evening."

Again that angry look crossed Philip's handsome face.

"In this case the usual customs must be waived," he answered, haughtily. "I will call for you when I drive. That must suffice."

Philip's thoughts were not any too pleasant as he wended his way to his boarding-house. He had always prided himself on his skill in evading women, lest a drag-net in the hands of some designing woman might ensnare him. Now he had been cleverly outwitted by an eighteen-year-old girl.

He suddenly lost all pleasure in driving. He was thankful for the rainy week that followed, as he was not obliged to take Trixy out driving.

One day a telegram came from London, requesting his immediate presence to attend a critical case. With no little satisfaction he bid the Pomeroys good-bye.

"We intend to cut short our summer outing We will return to London in a fortnight, and then I hope to have the pleasure of seeing you as often as possible," Trixy remarked.

"I lead a very busy life in town," he said. "A doctor's time is not his own."

"I shall not enjoy staying here after you have gone," she said, a trifle wistfully.

But he paid little heed to the remark.

She wanted to see him off at the station, but he would not hear of it.

The happiest moment of his life was when the train steamed out of Barminster.

"Why don't you stay over and see the next race!" said one of his friends, wringing his hand on the platform of the car.

"I shall never go to another race," he remarked, savagely.

"What! were you a plunger at the last race!" asked his friend.

But Philip made no answer.

"I am sorry if I have called up bitter recollections," laughed his friend.

Then the whistle sounded, and the train moved on.

Philip turned resolutely away from the window, that he might not catch a look of the hotel.

"I wonder if my patient, Miss Harris, and the relative this girl speaks of are one and the same person?" he asked himself.

He had once saved the life of this Miss Harris, and since that time she had been a devoted friend of his.

She was a most kind, estimable woman, and he admired her for her noble character. Surely she could not be the lady of whom Trixy Pomeroy spoke so derisively

He reached town at last, and, without taking time to refresh himself, hurried to see who it was that needed his help.

It was eleven o'clock, and the crowds on the streets of the great metropolis had begun to thin out.

His assistant, who was expecting him, said, in answer to his inquiry:

"It is Miss Harris, sir. She is dangerously ill, and will have no other doctor."

"I will go to her at once," said Philip.

But at that moment a man who had been hurt in a railway accident was brought in, and he was obliged to devote half an hour of his valuable time in dressing his wounds. Then with all possible haste he set out on his journey.

He gave orders to his driver to go to Miss Harris's residence by the shortest route possible.

There was a fire in one of the main thoroughfares. This blocked travel most effectually.

"We shall have to go round by some of the side streets, sir," said the driver.

"It does not matter," replied the young doctor; "only drive me there as quickly as possible."

At that very moment, in another part of the city, a woman who had once been young and beautiful lay dying. The room in which she lay was magnificent in its costly hangings; the lace draperies that hung from the windows represented a fortune, the carpets and rugs which covered the floor were of the costliest description. Rare paintings and the richest of bric-a-brac occupied the walls and other available places. Even the lace counterpane on the bed represented the expenditure of a vast sum of money. But the woman who lay moaning there in mortal pain would have given all to have purchased one hour of ease.

"Has the doctor come yet, Mary?" she asked.

"No," replied the faithful attendant, who bent over her. "But he cannot be long now. It is several hours since we telegraphed for him, and I have telephoned for him every hour since. At his place they say that he has already started for here."

"Are those carriage wheels? Go to the window, Mary, and see."

The attendant glided noiselessly to the heavily draped window and drew aside the hangings.

"No," she answered, gently; "he has not yet come."

"Something must have happened, Mary," half sobbed the sufferer; "I am sure of it."

Ay something out of the usual had happened to Doctor Desmond.

As his handsome brougham turned into one of the side streets, the doctor, in looking from the window, noticed a young girl hurrying along the street.

There was something about the symmetrical figure that caused the doctor to look a second time.

He said to himself that she must be young; and a feeling of pity thrilled his heart to see one so young threading the streets at that hour of the night.

So many people were making their way through the streets that the driver was only able to proceed slowly. And thus the young girl, who had quite unconsciously attracted the doctor's attention, kept pace with the vehicle.

Once, as Philip caught sight of her face, he felt as though an electric shock had suddenly passed through him. For a moment he was almost spell-bound. Where had he seen that face? Then suddenly it occurred to him that it was the facsimile of the picture he had bought abroad.

And as he gazed with spell-bound attention, much to his disgust, he saw the young woman stop in front of a wine-room and peer in at one of the windows. This action disgusted the young doctor immeasurably.

"How sad that one so fair as she should have gone wrong in the morning of life," he thought.

Suddenly she turned and attempted to dart across the street. But in that moment her foot slipped, and she was precipitated directly under the horses' hoofs.

A cry broke from the lips of the doctor, and was echoed by the man on the box.

"Are you hurt?" cried Doctor Desmond, springing from his seat, and bending over the prostrate figure of the girl.

"No, no!" cried the girl, in the saddest, sweetest voice he had ever heard. "They must not find me here when they come to the door; they will be so angry!" she said, springing to her feet.

At that moment there was a commotion in the wine-room, the door of which had just been opened.

As the girl turned to look in that direction, she saw a man pushed violently into the street.

"Oh, it is father—it is father!" cried the young girl, wildly, shaking herself free from the doctor's detaining hand. "Oh, they have killed my father! See! he is lying on the pavement dead, motionless! Oh, God, pity me! I am left, alone in the wide, wide world!"

CHAPTER VII.

Doctor Desmond sprang forward quickly.

"You are unnecessarily alarmed, my dear young lady," he said. "The gentleman is only stunned."

So it proved to be; for he had scarcely ceased speaking when the man struggled to his feet and looked about him in dazed bewilderment.

"Oh, papa, darling, have they killed you!" sobbed the young girl, springing wildly forward and throwing her arms about the dust-begrimed man.

"I don't know, Lois," he answered, in a shrill voice. "I am sure every bone in my body is broken—quite sure."

"No," interrupted Doctor Desmond, pitying the young girl in her distress; "you are only bruised. I am a doctor; if you will give me your address, I will look in and give you something when I return this way. I may return in an hour's time, I may be as late as to-morrow morning."

"We—we—could not pay for the services of a doctor, sir," sobbed the young girl. "If there is anything the matter, I shall have to take poor papa to the hospital."

"I would never go to the hospital, Lois," whined the man in a low tone. "That will be the last of me if I ever have to go there."

"I would make no charge whatever," said Doctor Desmond. "My services would be rendered gratis," he added, earnestly.

The young girl looked at him with tears shining in her great dark eyes.

"We live in the buildings just round the corner, sir," she said, "on the sixth floor. My father is John Davis, the basket-maker."

Doctor Desmond dared not remain another moment talking with them, and with a hasty bow he re-entered his carriage. But during the remainder of his journey he could think of nothing but the sad, beautiful face of Lois Davis, the basket-maker's daughter.

"What in the name of Heaven has come over me!" he muttered. "I have seen a face, and it seems as though I have stepped through the gates of the old world and entered a new one."

He collected his thoughts with a start, as the carriage reached its destination.

He had not realised how quickly the time had passed. He resolutely put all thoughts from him as he walked up the steps of the mansion before which he found himself.

The door opened before he could touch the bell.

"We have been waiting for you, doctor," said the low-voiced attendant who had come to the door.

He followed her through the magnificent hallway, and up the polished stairs to the apartment above, where he knew his patient was awaiting him.

The wan face lying against the pillow lighted up as the doctor entered. His bright, breezy presence was as good as medicine.

"You!" he cried, advancing to the couch. "Why, this will never do, Miss Harris! Tut, tut! you are not ill, you do not look it! This is only an excuse to send for me, and you know it. I can see at a glance that you are a long way from being ill, and you know it!" he repeated.

He said it in so hearty a manner and in such apparent good faith, that his words could not help but carry conviction with them.

Already the poor lady began to feel that she was not nearly so ill as she had believed herself to be.

But the doctor, bending over her, despite his reassuring smile and light badinage, realised with alarm that his patient was in great danger, that there was but a fighting chance for her life.

An hour or more he worked over her unceasingly, doing everything that skill and science could suggest.

With the dawning of the morning he would know whether she would live or die.

"Doctor," she said, looking up into his face, "do you think my illness is fatal? Is this my last call?"

He scarcely knew how to answer her. He felt that the truth should not be kept from her. But how was he to tell her?

"Because," she went on, before he could answer, "if it is, I had better know it in time, in order to settle up my affairs. I—I have always dreaded making a will; but—but there will come a time, sooner or later, when it will be necessary for me to do so."

Again Doctor Desmond laughed out that hearty, reassuring laugh.

"That is the natural feeling of a woman," he said. "Men never have that feeling. With them it is but an ordinary matter, as it should be."

"Would you advise me to make a will, doctor?" and the white face was turned wistfully to him.

"Certainly," he replied, with an attempt at light-heartedness. "It will occupy your mind, give you something to think about, and take your thoughts from your fancied aches and pains."

"Fancied!" replied the poor lady. "Ah, doctor, they are real enough, although you do not seem to think so. I—I want to leave all my money to you, doctor," she whispered. "You are the only person in the whole wide world who without an object has been kind to me," she added, with sudden energy. The fair, handsome face of the young doctor grew grave.

"Nay, nay," he said, gently. "While I thank you with all my heart for the favour you would bestow on me, still I must tell you that I could not take the money. No, no, my dear Miss Harris, it must go to the next of kin, if you have any."

Her face darkened as an almost forgotten memory rose up before her.

"No!" she said sharply; "anything but that! They never cared for me! They shall not fight over what I have when I am dead!"

"But you have relatives!" he questioned, anxiously.

"Yes," she said; one or two distant cousins, who married and who have families of their own. One of them wrote me often while I lived abroad, but in her letters she always wanted something, and such hints were very distasteful to me. She said that she had named one of her children after me, saying in the next sentence that I ought to make the girl my heiress. I wrote to her to come on to me, when I fell so ill, a few weeks ago. She answered me that she could not come, that she was very sick herself, and that the doctor had ordered her to Barminster, to live on a farm, until she should become stronger. When I grew stronger I came here with my faithful attendant Mary. I did not let them know that I was in London, and had taken possession of this fine house, which I own. Suddenly I fell ill again. I intended to wait until I grew stronger to hunt her up, and see how I should like her before making overtures of friendship to her. I should not like to make a will and leave all to these people whom I do not know. There are hundreds of homes for old and aged women that need the money more."

"Still, a will should always be made," said the doctor, earnestly. "I will send for some

one at once, if you will entertain the idea of attending to it."

"No," she replied, firmly. "If anything happens to me, I will let them take their chances. Don't say anything more about it, doctor; my mind is fully made up."

He dared not argue with a woman who was so near her end as he believed her to be.

The doctor renewed his efforts. He did not sit down and do the ordering as many other physicians would have done, but attended to the slightest details himself.

This case proved to be one of the greatest achievements of his life. From the very Valley of the Shadow of Death he drew back the struggling, flattering spirit of the helpless lady. And when the first grey streaks of dawn flushed the eastern sky, the doctor drew a great sigh of relief.

"Thank Heaven, she will live!" he said.

When the sun rose later the danger was past—the battle of life had been won, and death vanquished.

Although Dr. Desmond was very weary after his night's vigil, still he left the house with a happy heart beating in his bosom.

He had a sincere regard for the kind and gentle lady. There was no one, outside of his own family, for whom he had a deeper, truer regard. He would have felt her loss a personal one.

The servants in Miss Harris's magnificent home had prepared a very nice breakfast for the young doctor, to which he did ample justice.

He scarcely felt the fatigue of his arduous labours as he stepped into his carriage again. His heart gave a strange throb as he ordered the driver to go to the tenement house, the home of the old basket-maker and his beautiful daughter.

How strange it was that the very thought of this fair girl seemed to give his tired brain rest for a moment!

He soon found himself at the street and number he wanted.

"Does Mr. Davis, the basket-maker, live here?" he asked, pausing for a moment to inquire of a woman who sat on the doorstep with a little child in her arms.

"Yes," she answered, in a surly voice; "and more's the pity for the rest of us tenants, for he is a regular fiend incarnate, sir, and has a fit of the delirium tremens as regularly as the month comes round. He's got 'em now. A fine dance he leads that poor daughter of his. Any other girl would get out and leave him. Are you the doctor Miss Lois was expecting? If so, walk straight up. She is waiting for you."

CHAPTER VIII.

Dr. Philip Desmond, with as much speed as possible, made his way up the long, steep flights of dark, narrow stairs, and through the still darker passages, which were only lighted by the open doors here and there, revealing rooms inhabited by half a dozen persons. They were all talking, fighting, or scrambling at the same time; and the odour of that never-to-be-forgotten smell of frying onions and sausages greeted his nostrils at every turn until it seemed to him that he must faint.

"Great Heavens! how can so fair a young girl live in an atmosphere like this!" he asked himself.

At length, almost exhausted, for he was unused to climbing, this haughty, aristocratic young doctor found himself on the sixth floor of the tenement house, and he knocked at the first door he came to.

It was opened by the young girl Lois. He could see at a glance that her face bore the traces of trouble, and the dark eyes, still heavy with unshed tears, showed signs of recent weeping.

"Oh, I am so glad that you have come, doctor!" she said, clasping her little hands. "My poor father is so much worse. Please step in this way!"

He was ushered into a little sitting-room, and as he entered it he saw that everything was scrupulously neat and clean.

A carpet, which had at one time been red, but was now hopelessly faded, covered the floor; but there was not a speck of dust upon it. Four very antique chairs and an old-fashioned settee were placed against the four sides of the square apartment; a small, square table occupied the centre of the room; upon it were a few books.

What struck the young doctor's attention at once was an earthen pot containing a beautiful rosebush. It was in full bloom, and the great cluster of roses filled the room with the sweetest perfume. His surprise at seeing the beautiful plant blooming there was as great as seeing the fair young girl in that place.

"Lois!" shrieked a voice from an inner room, "come here and chase them away at once! They're after me! The place is alive with them!" and a mighty howl of rage accompanied the words, and made the girl's lovely face blanch, as she quickened her steps to almost a run, and gasped out,—

"Poor papa is out of his mind, doctor. Please come quickly, and see him!"

It did not require a second glance for the doctor to understand all; and straightway he proceeded to give the man a draught, which had the effect of quieting him. The young girl stood by the man with clasped hands and dilated eyes, scarcely breathing as she watched him.

He raved of the sea, and of the snakes which he declared were gliding through the green, glassy waters, and at last he fell back exhausted upon his pillow. But despite the fact that the medicine administered was very powerful, yet sleep did not come to his bright, fiery eyes.

The young doctor turned impulsively to the girl by his side.

"Pardon me for the question, but do you live alone with your father?" he asked.

"Yes," she replied, in a voice that thrilled him as the grandest, sweetest music he had heard had never had power to do. "We have only each other," she added, watching the distorted face on the pillow with a fond wistfulness that made the young doctor, who was watching her, almost envy the father.

"I will come again to-morrow," he said, "and prescribe for him. I have done all the good that is possible for the present."

"Are you one of those fellows who leave their own medicine?" asked the basket-maker.

"Yes. In most cases," said Philip.

"Well, I should like you to prescribe a bottle of brandy, and leave enough to last until you come again. You say you don't charge for coming or for the medicine you leave?"

"Oh, no, no! Please don't prescribe that, if anything else can be given," pleaded the young girl in a wistful voice.

"Are you running this case of mine, or is the doctor?" thundered the old man. "I say I want brandy. I ought to know what I need. That's the only thing that will do me the least particle of good, and the doctor knows it."

"Oh, papa, I pray you not to ask for that!" sobbed the girl. "It will only make you rave again!"

"Leave the room, Lois," exclaimed her father, "Don't attempt to protest against what I need!"

"I will attend to the matter and arrange it in such a way, by the drink I shall give him, that his craving for liquor will die away by degrees. By to-morrow he will not ask for it."

"Oh, sir, if you could only bring about that great blessing, I would pray for you every hour of my life! You little realise the sunshine such a reform would bring to it!"

This young girl was lovely even in her sadness. But when that glad smile illumined her face, and the light glowed in those slumbrous dark eyes for one brief instant, the young man who beheld her thought he had never seen anyone so fair.

(To be continued.)

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FACETIÆ.

"FINE morning, your worship," affably remarked the man who had been arrested the night before for being drunk and disorderly. "Yes, indeed," responded the justice; "quite a fine morning—in fact, a 10s. fine morning."

MR. FICKLEBY: "Do you know, Miss Dewitt, you looked charming at the ball the other night!" Miss Dewitt: "Nonsense! I don't believe it." "Oh, but you did. Actually, I didn't recognise you at first."

TRAMP (in the country): "Yes, I once rode er wheel, but I had ter give it up." Biker: "Why?" Tramp: "Well, yer see, the owner wus comin' down the road behind me, and the policeman had a rope stretched across in front."

"I SUPPOSE that there are many problems which polar explorers seek to solve," said the unscientific man. "Yes," replied the intrepid traveller; "a great many." "What is the most important one?" "Getting back."

"GOOD-BYE, Professor," said the sweet girl graduate. "I shall always remember you kindly, for to you I am indebted for all I know." "Say no more," replied the professor, "Say no more. Such a trifle is not worthy of a thought, I assure you."

FIRST PITTITE (leaning forward and whispering to the theatre-goer in front of him): "Beg your pardon, but won't you ask your wife to remove her hat? I can't see the stage." Second Pittite (whispering back): "Ask her yourself, please. You don't know her as well as I do."

MRS. BLACK: "How does your husband spend his time in the evening?" Mrs. White: "He stays at home and thinks of schemes to make money." "And what do you do with yourself when he is thus occupied?" "Oh, I think of schemes to spend it."

"I'LL never forget the time I took my good old aunt from the country to see a Shakespearean revival at one of the theatres." "Did she like it?" "Like it? I found out that she would never have gone at all but for the impression she had that 'revival' meant something religious."

"WHAT do you think? My wife's father told me before we got married that he would give me a handsome present on our wedding-day." "And didn't he?" "Well, I waited over a week, and as he didn't mention the subject, I asked him for it, and all he said was: 'Why, didn't I give you my daughter?'"

"SEEMS to me I've seen your face before," said the judge, peering through his spectacles. "Yes, your honour, you have," replied the prisoner; "I am the professor who gives the young lady next door to you lessons on the piano." "Six years!" came from the judge, quickly.

"JAMES," said the milkman to his new boy, "d'ye see what I'm a-doin' of?" "Yes, sir," replied James; "you're a-pourin' water into the milk." "No, I'm not, James; I'm a-pourin' milk into the water. So if anybody asks you if I put water into the milk, you can tell 'em no. Allers stick to the truth, James. Cheatin' is bad 'nough, but lyin' is wuss."

A KIND of quack-doctor in Ireland was recently being examined at an inquest on his treatment of a patient who had died. "Moi treatment is infallible," he said, somewhat hurt. "I gave him ipecacuanha." "You might just as well have given the Aurora Borealis," said the coroner. "Indade, yer honour, and that's just what I should have given him next if he hadn't died."

SIMPSON (angrily): "See here, Jimson, I just want to know if you turned down this side street to avoid me?" Jimson: "Why—er—certainly not, old boy. I—er—didn't see you." Simpson (somewhat mollified): "I had an idea you thought I was one of those fellows who always borrow and never pay." Jimson: "No, no—er—of course not. Your credit is as good as anyone's." Simpson: "I beg your pardon, Jimson, I see I've done you injustice. Lend me five pounds, will you?"

"WE have parted for ever," said the young man, sadly. "She is never going to even write to me again." "Are you sure of that?" asked his sympathetic friend. "Yes. She told me so in each of her last three letters."

THREE different waiters at an hotel asked a prim, precise little man at dinner if he would have soup. A little annoyed, he said to the last waiter who asked the question,—"Is it compulsory?" "No, sir," said the waiter; "I think it's mock turtle."

"I CAME to ask for your daughter in marriage, sir," said the young man. "Have you money of your own?" asked the careful parent. "Oh, you misunderstand me, sir. I do not want to buy her."

AN old Yorkshire woman being much distressed at the sudden loss of her only son, the dissenting minister assured her, consolingly: "He is now with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob." "That's the worst on it," she sobbed, "and he was always so shy among strangers."

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SOCIETY.

The Duke and Duchess of York are going this week to Sandringham for about a fortnight.

Prince Edward of York has at last attained to the dignity of sailor suits. He is immensely proud of his pockets and his freedom from petticoats.

It is expected that the Crown Prince and Princess of Denmark will visit the Prince and Princess of Wales at Marlborough House this season.

The German Emperor will set out from Kiel in the *Hohenzollern* for his Scandinavian tour on June 22nd, and will not return to Berlin until the end of July.

The improvement in the health of the Empress Eugénie is described as slow and steady. Her Majesty was not fatigued, and was greatly gratified by the Queen's visit to her last month.

The Princess of Wales has the most valuable thimble in the world. It is of gold, delicately traced with blue enamel, studded with small slabs of various precious stones. It is an heirloom inherited from Denmark.

The Princess of Wales has kindly consented to open the new laboratories of the London School of Medicine for Women in Handel-street, Brunswick-square, in July. The Prince of Wales will accompany her Royal Highness on the occasion.

There is to be a great family gathering at Friedrichshof in September for the marriage of the Empress Frederick's granddaughter, the Princess Feodore of Saxe-Meiningen and Prince Henry of Reuss.

It is thought in usually well-informed quarters that the retirement of the Duke of Connaught from the Aldershot command may be followed ere long by his appointment to the post of Commander-in-Chief of the Forces in Ireland. This will no doubt be a very popular step so far as Ireland is concerned, and might supersede the much-discussed question of the establishment of a Royal residence in Ireland.

The Prince and Princess of Naples left Italy at the end of last month on a foreign tour, and they will be away until the end of September, going first to Cettigne on a long visit to the Prince and Princess of Montenegro. The Prince and Princess will visit the Emperor and Empress of Russia at Peterhof, and the German Emperor and Empress at Potsdam.

Princess Henry of Prussia, who has come to England, with her two children for a stay of several months, the guest of her Majesty, is at Balmoral. Prince Henry's racing cutter, *L'Espérance*, had commenced fitting out at Southampton, but fresh orders have been received, and she is now laid up, and will not be again in commission until the season of 1900, as Prince Henry is not expected to return to Europe for nearly two years.

The Crown Prince and Crown Princess of Denmark are expected to arrive in London early in July from Copenhagen, and will be the guests of the Prince and Princess of Wales at Marlborough House for two or three weeks. The date of the visit cannot be fixed definitely for some time to come, as the Crown Prince Frederick cannot leave Denmark until King Christian has returned home from his visit to Wiesbaden and Gmünden.

The bride of Prince Christian of Denmark has a bedroom which could be reckoned as the Eighth Wonder of the World. The bed is in carved oak with painted medallions, each one being a masterpiece of work signed by a well-known artist. It is provided with thousands of tiny fine steel springs, upon which are thrown a thin mattress in soft white felt, and another one in horsehair, both wrapped in silk cases. The hangings are of the rarest shade of slate blue; the counterpane, of brocade of the same colour embossed with gold, is surmounted with a golden fringe which is said to weigh about forty pounds. Then comes an eiderdown covered with a rare piece of Cluny lace, laid in places with "choux" of white chiffon. The carpet is of the softest white wool with pale blue patterns; the chairs and couches are *en suite*.

STATISTICS.

The Atlantic Ocean is crossed monthly by 1,000 ships.

The unexplored area of Canada is 1,000,000 square miles.

On an average, every woman carries forty to sixty miles of hair upon her head.

At sea-level an object 100 feet high is visible a little over 13 miles. If 500 feet high, it is visible nearly 30 miles.

The risk of being struck by lightning is five times greater in the country than in cities, and twenty times greater at sea than on the railway.

Basing his calculations on the average increase of insanity within the last forty years, an English statistician has come to the conclusion that in the year 2301 everybody will be in the asylums.

GEMS.

Think always only of the best, the good will very soon appear.

The grand essentials to happiness in this life are something to do, something to love, and something to hope for.

All great men are brave in initiative; but the courage which enables them to succeed where others dare not even attempt is never so potent as when it leads to entire self-forgetfulness.

The desire to be physically perfect is almost universal. Love of the beautiful is an instinct of the human mind, as is mother's love. We are born with responsiveness to beauty in all things. Admiration of beauty in man or woman is as legitimate as is admiration of a dew-drenched rose.

HOUSEHOLD TREASURES.

Toasted Bread.—Hold it off the fire so it will get dried through. Serve toast thoroughly dried through to invalids. There is nothing equal to a bright coal fire for toasting bread.

Fruit Fritters.—Cut the fruit in thin slices and dip in the following batter: Beat the yolks of three eggs very light, and add a gill of milk, a saltspoonful of salt, and four ounces of flour. Fry in very hot fat.

A Tasty Dessert.—Two pounds of apples peeled and sliced, one pound of white sugar, and half a pint of water. Boil all together until quite thick, and keep stirring to prevent burning. Put into a mould, turn out when cold, and stick all over it split almonds. Serve with whipped cream.

Minced Eggs.—Take four teacups, butter them, sprinkle over with chopped parsley, a grate of lemon-peel and a bit of onion all mixed together, add pepper and salt. Break a fresh egg into each cup and steam until set. Turn each out on a round of hot toast which has been spread with butter and anchovy paste.

Soft Ginger Cake.—Mix one egg, one-half cup of butter together; add one cup of molasses, then dissolve two teaspoonfuls of soda in half a cup of lukewarm milk and pour it in. Next put in a teaspoonful of allspice, a teaspoonful of ginger, and a teaspoonful of cinnamon; add two cups of flour; bake the cake in a good-sized dripping pan, well buttered, and bake slowly.

Minute Pudding.—Put a pint of milk and a quarter of a teaspoonful of salt in a thick porcelain pan. Set it over the fire, and when it boils, sift into it with the hand two-thirds of a teacup of flour. Set it aside and add a teacup of raisins which have been stoned, cut in halves and stewed. Cover closely, set it on the back of the range for ten minutes, and serve with cream and sugar, or any kind of sauce preferred. It should be rather lumpy and steaming hot. This pudding is easily made and wonderfully good.

MISCELLANEOUS.

The catacombs of Rome are to be lighted with electricity.

The Pope keeps a number of birds in his library and in the alcoves of his reception-room.

The royal crown of Persia, which dates back to remote ages, is in the form of a pot of flowers, surmounted by an uncut ruby the size of a hen's egg.

The phonendoscope, a new invention, conveys to the physician the sounds made by any internal organ, and enables him to decide whether it is healthy or not.

All refined gold is not alike. Australian gold, for instance, is distinctly redder than that from California. The Ural gold is the reddest found anywhere.

An eminent astronomer says that for communication with the inhabitants of Mars we should require a flag as large as Ireland and a pole 500 miles long.

Each letter-carrier of India has a run of six miles, and at the end of it is relieved by another carrier, who at once begins his run. Thus the mail is conveyed over unpopulous sections in comparatively quick time.

There is one part of the world at least where bicycles do not meet with approval. This is Morocco, where the Grand Vizier has steadfastly tabooed the use of "such dangerous instruments."

Roof playgrounds on school buildings are to be established in New York, the Senate at Albany having passed a bill authorising the School Commissioners to open them for the summer months.

Cloth is now being successfully made from wood. Strips of fine grained wood are boiled and crushed between rollers, and the filaments are spun into threads, from which cloth can be woven in the usual way.

The "bottle post" is an old institution on the south coast of Iceland. Letters are put into corked bottles, which are wafted by the wind to the opposite coast. They also contain a cigar or other trifle to induce the finder to deliver the letter as addressed.

Humming birds are domesticated by placing in their cages a number of paper flowers of tubular form containing a small quantity of sugar and water, which must be frequently renewed. Of this liquid the birds partake, and quickly become apparently contented with their captivity.

Spain has twenty-two thousand and sixty-six elementary schools, but only forty-one per cent. of the children receive even the rudiment of an education. The teachers receive only twenty-five to four hundred dollars per year, and most of them are unable to collect that. In 1893 there was owing to Spanish teachers one million six hundred thousand dollars.

A curious innovation at the coming Omaha Exposition in the United States will be a bureau of courtesy. Not only is the idea novel, but it is surprising to learn that nearly all the people of the city will be enrolled in the committee. Every member will wear a badge, and visitors will be at liberty to address anyone who wears the badge and ask for information just as much as he likes. The member, on the other hand, will be pledged to treat the visitor courteously and answer his questions, or put him in the way of getting them answered.

Swiss funeral customs are most peculiar. At the death of a person the family inserts a formal, black-edged announcement in the papers asking for sympathy, and stating that "the mourning urn" will be exhibited during certain hours on a special day. In front of the house where the person died there is placed a little black table, covered with a black cloth, on which stands a black jar. Into this the friends and acquaintances of the family drop little black-margined visiting cards, sometimes with a few words of sympathy on them.

NOTICES TO CORRESPONDENTS.

ANXIOUS.—The marriage is valid.

W. W.—You have no legal claim.

SECRET.—We do not reply by post.

PERE.—Her Majesty was born on May 24th, 1819.

PHŒNIX.—The lease is not affected by the death of the lessor.

L. P.—The Married Women's Property Act came into force in 1883.

C. AND Co.—We do not provide recipes for manufacturers "on a large scale."

PATER.—Liability to pay a son's debts contracted as a minor depends upon their nature.

LAWFUL.—The outgoing tenant must not pull up flowers or bushes when he removes.

RHODA.—You cannot possibly do that which you desire yourself; go to a skilful dentist.

CURLY LOCKS.—All dyes are injurious if used for any length of time. We do not recommend them.

CARISSIMA.—You require to have your sight properly tested. Consult a skilful ophthalmic surgeon.

FOOLISH WIFE.—The woman is not responsible for debts contracted by her husband before marriage.

NOX.—President M'Kinley is an American born citizen of the States, or he could not be President.

IN A FIX.—We do not recommend solicitors. Apply to one who is known to you or to some trustworthy friend.

SAFETY.—You will find the information in a Richmond guide-book, which can be easily obtained of a bookseller there.

A DUFFER.—Nuttall's Dictionary, then, seems to be the one for you; there are more comprehensive works, but not cheap.

PETRUCHIO.—Simply go to the clergyman of your district and put up the banns. The cost is a few shillings only.

INQUIRER.—It was stated lately, on what seemed good authority, that Wel-hai-wei should be pronounced "Way-high-way."

J. CAVE.—The landlord is not obliged to assign reasons. The length of notice depends upon the terms of holding, which you do not state.

LADY MABEL.—Soups and vegetables are the proper diet for spring, with just as much fruit as the appetite and financial condition will permit.

IN DISTRESS.—If you cannot find any friend who will advance what you want, on what is virtually no security, we are afraid you have no chance.

ROSE T.—Tan shoes may be made very new-looking by the use of tan polish, which comes in small bottles, and may be had at almost any fancy shoe shop.

TOPICAL.—Spain's colonies are Cuba, Porto Rico, Ceuta (Morocco), Fernando Po, Annabom, the Philippine Islands, the Marians Islands, and the Carolines.

CHERRY RIPE.—We are unable to tell you what the varied meanings of "squeezing the hand" are. We believe it is a weakness that lovers are addicted to in a measure.

D. C.—The Tichborne baronetcy and estates are at present held by Sir Henry Alfred Joseph Doughty-Tichborne, in whose interests they were defended against the Claimant.

DARCY.—Paymaster clerks in the Royal Navy are like clerks ashore; they have to keep accounts, write letters, and attend to the other subordinate duties assigned them. They have no rank as officers.

HARD UP.—Unless you are able to pay for instruction there is no way other than going into a machine shop as an apprentice. There are trade schools, but they involve tuition fees and other expenses.

DE RIGUEUR.—When a widow remarries, she presents a bared wedding-ring finger to her intended husband, and it is afterwards quite a matter of personal taste with her whether she wears one or more wedding-rings.

A CONSTANT READER.—We are not in a position to give you such information as you require. Why not obtain some of the trade journals, and put yourself into communication with those firms who supply such things?

VETERAN.—The index to the registers of births, deaths, and marriages in England, kept at Somerset House, only commences in January, 1837, so that you would have to apply to a local source for the information, the parish clerk being the most likely.

FASHION.—We do not approve of the long skirts for walking; they are most uncomfortable and hardly safe. Tailor-made dresses have sensible skirts, unlined if the material is sufficiently thick to hang well. You might have an Eton bodice or a Roumanian vest, which is somewhat like a Bolero.

F. P.—If the young man's family is such that you would like to know them, make it convenient at some of the church gatherings to become acquainted with the sister. Then all things will be easily smoothed out. Or let the young man ask his sister to seek your acquaintance, which would be even better. Until that time it would be as well to avoid meeting, if possible.

INEXPERIENCED.—You need not trouble about receipts for money sent in postal orders; authorities take receipts from the person who cashes these, and keeps them to prove payment when required; see that you have record of dates and number of orders.

FRIEND.—Quakers have not been required to take oaths since the reign of William III., when they first obtained legal protection. In the time of George I. an Act was made giving to their affirmations all the force of oaths; and in this there was no less safety than justice.

ANGRY TENANT.—It is not necessary that the landlord should say why he warns away a tenant any more than it is for a tenant to explain to a landlord his reasons for leaving; either can put an end to the agreement between them by giving the notice they bargained for when they first came together.

DOLLIE.—It all depends upon the circumstances under which a love engagement is broken off whether either party should return the presents that have been made. When the breaking off of the engagement is by mutual consent, the strict and recognised etiquette is that there should be a mutual return of all presents.

READER FOR YEARS.—If it has been in for some time it is not probable that you will be able to remove it by any process. You might try wetting it with milk. Put a thick cloth wet with skim milk over the spot; let it remain twenty-four hours; then wash the cloth and the spot in clear water. If this does not remove the stain, your best way is to seek the services of a professional cleaner.

GYP.—Powdered borax scattered freely in places where they are plenty, and forced into cracks and crevices where they are known to hide, if done with a liberal hand, and persevered in, has been found in countless instances to eventually banish the intruders; but unless you are prepared to use plenty of powder, and carefully seek out their runs, and patiently persevere with the remedy, you will do no good.

GOING AND COMING.

A warm good-bye to the friend who is going,
We are sorry to part with the true and tried;
We remember only the joy he has brought us,
The trials and sorrows are all thrust aside.

A pleasant smile for the friend who is coming,
How we watch for his presence with hearts aglow!
We taste, in advance, the joys that await us,
That he brings with him gladness we surely know.

A warm farewell to the year that is going!
Though he brought to us many a day of cheer,
There were days of pain and of burden-bearing,
Yet we know 'twas a friend, this good Old Year.

A welcome smile to the year that is coming!
Now our hearts are wide open, "Come, enter, my friend!
Let us walk together in blest communion,
Let us love each the other until the end."

UNCLE SAM.—The U.S.A. currency is the dollar, worth about 4s. 2d.; the cent, worth about a halfpenny. The gold coinage is the double eagle of twenty dollars, the eagle, of ten dollars, the half-eagle, the three-dollar piece, the quarter-eagle, and the dollar piece. The silver coins are the silver dollar, the half-dollar, and quarter-dollar, the dime, the half-dime, and the three-cent. piece. The copper coins are the cent. and half-cent piece. The course of exchange with London is generally quoted about 4 85 dollars per £1 sterling.

JACK'S MOTHER.—Boys are admitted to Christ's Hospital, London, from seven to ten years of age, and the mode of admission is by presentation of a governor. The chief qualification for obtaining a presentation, in the case of children not orphans, rests in their parents not possessing more than a very moderate income, some latitude being allowed in cases of large families, &c. A list of the governors having appointments for the year is published annually in March, and is to be had at the counting-house of the hospital.

SYMPATHISER.—Of the cities of Cuba, Havana, the capital of the island, is chief. It is a city of about two hundred and twenty thousand inhabitants, with fine promenades, boulevards and streets; first-class hotels, with restaurants equal to those of New York, Paris, Buenos Ayres, &c.; three theatres, in which first-class companies perform, one of them, the Teatra Tacon, being one of the largest in the world; and clubs and social and scientific institutions. The other cities of the island are of much less importance; the principal are Matanzas, Puerto Principe and Santiago de Cuba, with some forty thousand inhabitants each, and Cienfuegos with about twenty-five thousand.

KATHIE.—Put some hot water in your tea-kettle, but do not fill it up further than to where the hole of the spout enters the body of the kettle. Set it on the fire, and when the water boils the steam will rush out of the spout. Hold the velvet where spotted in this steam, not too near, but near enough to let the steam act upon the spots which are caused by the rain having flattened the pile. Under the action of the steam, if judiciously done, the pile will rise and the spots disappear. In some cases where the wet lies in patches and the spot becomes a very large one, a little help may be given by a touch here and there with the points of a clean, rather stiff-haired, brush, but the less you have to meddle with the pile the better.

MINER.—Gold maintains its value because it is a scarce metal; if ever the supply should be increased by the discovery of mines such as yield enormous quantities of silver and lessen the value of that metal, then gold too will come down in price; but meanwhile any little additional quantity brought into circulation by discoveries such as those at Klondyke is quickly absorbed in one or other of the innumerable industrial processes to which gold is adapted.

COMPENSATION.—There is not a word in your letter to indicate the nature of your illness, or how it was contracted; if you cannot allege that it was brought on by the work you had to do, then you are not entitled at law to wages for any time beyond the date when you were set aside by the illness; but it is customary among liberal-minded employers to give a servant perhaps two weeks' wages beyond what she has earned in such a case.

OMAN.—Put four ounces gum shellac and half ounce gum benzoin in pint of methylated spirits in warm place to dissolve, shaking it occasionally; when dissolved let stand in cool place for two or three days to settle, pour off clear for fine work, cork it away; add enough spirits to sediment to make it workable, pass through muslin, and it will suit for first coat of coarse work; take half pound finely ground bronze green, modifying colour to taste with lamp black, red or yellow ochre; have iron clean and smooth, add enough varnish to colour, slightly warm iron and lay on thin coat; add another when dry, and repeat till covered; next touch prominent parts with varnish only, and when nearly dry lay on a small quantity of gold powder with dry brush; varnish over all.

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WHICH IS THE RIGHT ROAD?

SPEAKING of the Bourbons, Napoleon said they never forgot anything and never learned anything. For them, a most unlucky state of mind; they lost the French throne by it. It is only the teachable who accumulate practical knowledge.

One dark night, many years ago, I found myself in a strange part of the country where four roads crossed one another. Only one of them could possibly be the road I ought to take to get home. There was no guide-board, no house near, nobody to inquire of, and it was quite dark. What did I do? I gave my horses the word to go on, and let them have their heads. They turned sharply to the left, broke into a trot, and set me down at my own door within the hour. They had been that way before. They had learned. They had remembered. That is what is called "horse-sense"; a trait worth cultivating.

Now, how long are we going to be (you and I) in learning certain simple but important things? —for example, that sick headache has nothing to do with the head, and heartburn nothing to do with the heart? Yes, and other truths right along that line.

"I was much troubled with sick headache," writes a lady, "and as I went about the house I felt dizzy. At night I got very little sleep owing to an awful pain in my side; and as a consequence I rose in a morning unrefreshed and dull. So weak was I that I could scarcely walk about or lift the lightest thing.

"My trouble began in September, 1891. The nature of it I did not then understand. I was enfeebled, low, heavy, and languid. I was exhausted out of all proportion to the work I did. There was a sour taste in my mouth, and I was often sick, throwing up a green fluid, very nauseating and bitter. My appetite was poor, and after eating I experienced great distress at the stomach, with pain and oppression at the sides and chest. My food seemed to lie upon me like a stone.

"In my right side particularly there was so sharp and cutting a pain that I could not draw a deep breath. This state of things lasted for two years, no treatment or medicines having any good effect. In October, 1893, I first heard of Mother Seigel's Syrup, and began to use it, having bought a bottle from Mr. Williams' Stores, at Erwood. In three days I was greatly relieved, and in a few weeks (continuing with the Syrup) I was well as ever. (Signed) (Mrs) Catherine Bevan, Bridge Villa, Erwood, Breconshire, December 4th, 1894."

Another person relates an almost identical experience, saying that year after year he was never free from pain. "In December, 1882," he concludes, "I bought a bottle of Mother Seigel's Curative Syrup from a chemist at West Cowes, and was much better in a week. My appetite returned, and the food I took caused me no more distress. It digested and gave me natural strength. Soon after *the dreadful heartburn* left me, and from that time to this I have had no return of it. I keep in the best of health, for which I thank Mother Seigel's Syrup. (Signed) Isaac Gubbins, Market Gardener, Rew-street, Gurnard, Cowes, Isle of Wight, December 12th, 1894."

Both sick headache and heartburn are among the symptoms of indigestion or dyspepsia—these two words meaning virtually the same thing. The food ferments, decomposes, and turns sour in the stomach, and sets free certain poisonous principles which enter the blood and disorder the nerves, and, indeed, the whole system. The sense of heat in the chest and throat (*heartburn*) arises from the acids engendered in the stomach; and the sick headache is caused by the starved and weakened nerves, which all centre in the head. The source of the whole trouble being the inflamed stomach and the arrested digestion, the remedy must necessarily be addressed to that organ—not to the mere localities where the symptomatic pains are felt.

Now, as Mother Seigel's Syrup cures the single and only *source* of all these pains and miseries, they vanish with it. Can we not all see this, understand it, and act upon it? If so, we shall have learned a useful lesson indeed. For in nearly every case of illness the road through the stomach is the right road to Health.

London: Published by the Proprietor, at 26, Catherine Street, Strand, and printed by WOODFALL and KINDER, 70 to 76, Long Acre, W.C.